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ABSTRACT

This publication highlights 93 exemplary practices of school, family, and community partnerships selected from members of the National Network of Partnerships Schools at Johns Hopkins University, Maryland. Network member sites represent 18 states and 2 Canadian provinces. The publication highlights six types of practices: parenting (e.g., parent workshops and grandparent gatherings); communicating (e.g., coffees with the principal and family-school picnic supper); volunteering (e.g., drop-in mathematics tutoring clinics and environmental day in the park); learning at home (e.g., family science night and Latino literacy programs); decision making (e.g., lunch for parent team members and technology committee); and collaborating with the community (e.g., after school tutoring for ninth graders and school beautification project). The publication includes lists of activities to help schools reach improvement goals, activities by school level, and activities that support multiple types of school and community involvement. The publication also includes examples of district level leadership (e.g., community bulletin boards and monthly leadership meetings); organization level leadership (e.g., mother-daughter college preparation program and parent-to-parent interviews); and state level leadership (e.g., first day of school celebrations and school improvement plan training.) (SM)

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Promising Partnership Practices 2002

The 5th annual collection from members of the
National Network of Partnership Schools
Johns Hopkins University

Edited by
Natalie Rodriguez Jansorn and Karen Clark Salinas,
with Katharine M. Gerne

UD 035 380

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Promising Partnership Practices *2002*

The 5th annual collection from members of the
National Network of Partnership Schools
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Edited by
Natalie Rodriguez Jansorn and Karen Clark Salinas,
with Katharine Gerne

Introduction

Promising Partnership Practices 2002

Celebrating five years of publication with its largest collection yet, *Promising Partnership Practices 2002* highlights ninety-three exemplary practices of school, family, and community partnerships selected from almost 150 submissions by members of the National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University. Eighty-five Network member sites are featured, representing eighteen states and two Canadian provinces. High schools, middle schools, elementary schools, early childhood centers, a school for the deaf, and a juvenile detention center all share strategies to strengthen partnerships using the six types of involvement. Districts, organizations, and state departments of education describe leadership strategies and partnership practices that support schools' efforts. Though strategies, resources, and populations vary, one constant theme remains: school, family, and community partnerships benefit all children.

Promising Partnership Practices 2002 abounds with practices that support all students to achieve success in school and in life. Increasingly, partnership practices at all levels of schooling link the six types of involvement to student academic goals in particular literacy, math, and science. States and districts are crafting policies, facilitating professional development trainings, and conducting monthly leadership meetings to guide schools in developing goal-oriented programs linked to school improvement plans. In addition to supporting student achievement, many partnership practices foster a sense of community by bringing together families, school staff, students, and community members, and by supporting students' character development. Partnership programs continue to expand their reach to all family members, including speakers of languages other than English, kinship caregivers, and fathers. The descriptions featured in *Promising Partnership Practices 2002* provide insights and information useful to those starting new programs and to those improving existent programs.

We greatly appreciate the school Action Teams for Partnerships and the district, organization, and state leadership teams whose dedicated efforts throughout the year made this collection possible. In addition, the school districts of Buffalo, NY; Holy Family Catholic Regional, Alberta, Canada; Los Angeles, CA; and Naperville, IL, submitted their district collections of promising practices to the National Network. Thank you to everyone who shared practices of school, family, and community partnerships. Your inspiring learning experiences will help schools, districts, organizations, and states gain new approaches to strengthen programs of partnership to benefit all students, their families, and schools.

National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University

Established by researchers at Johns Hopkins University in 1996, the National Network of Partnership Schools brings together schools, districts, organizations, and state departments of education that are committed to developing and maintaining effective programs of school, family, and community partnerships. Each Partnership School strengthens its program by tapping into the six types of involvement and by using an action team for partnerships approach. Districts, organizations, and states provide leadership and support for schools' efforts to build excellent partnership programs. Members of the National Network of Partnership Schools continually learn, from the research and from each other, strategies to improve and sustain comprehensive programs of school, family, and community partnerships to increase student success. For more information about the National Network of Partnership Schools, please visit *www.partnershipschools.org*.

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		1	2	3	4	5	6
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Family Read Parent Workshops	3	X					X
Kinship Care Support Group	6	X					X
Waterford Computer Usage for ESL Parent Class	10	X	X				
Type 2-Communicating							
Community Breakfast	18		X				X
Community Breakfast Forum	20		X				X
Musical Motivation for Test-Taking	26		X				X
Parent Information Booth	30		X				X
Providing Information to Parents	31		X			X	
Spring Fair	34		X				X
Thanksgiving Dinner	37		X	X			
Work/Achievement Survey	39		X				X
Type 3-Volunteering							
Calling All Males	43			X		X	
Drop-In Math Tutoring Clinics	45			X	X		X
Environmental Day in the Park	47			X			X
Fall Harvest Potluck	49		X	X			
Family Gym Nights	50			X			X
Healthy Snack Program	52			X			X
Incentive Nights	53			X	X	X	
Lunch Bunch	55			X			X
PSD Fashion Show	59			X			X
Type 4-Learning at Home							
Bedtime Stories and Birthday Party for Dr. Seuss	64				X		X
Breakfast and a Book	66				X	X	X
Family Fun Math: The 100th Day of School	72			X	X		X
Family Nights	76				X		X
Family Science Night	80				X		X
Foreign Languages: Your Passport to the World	83		X		X		

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ACTIVITY (by Primary Type)	PAGE	TYPE OF INVOLVEMENT					
		1	2	3	4	5	6
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Mad Hatter Measurement	87				X		X
Proficiency Breakfast	94		X		X		
Type 5-Decision Making							
Technology Committee	104			X		X	
Type 6-Collaborating With the Community							
Ozzie's Reading Club	113				X		X
School Beautification Project	116			X			X
The Quilting Project	118			X			X

TYPE 1
Parenting

Assist families with parenting and child-rearing skills, understanding child and adolescent development, and setting home conditions that support children as students at each age and grade level. Assist schools in understanding families.

FAMILY READ PARENT WORKSHOPS
Victory Boulevard Elementary School
North Hollywood, California

Victory Boulevard Elementary School had limited funds to spend on family involvement. As a result, they looked for good programs that were free. Victory Boulevard contacted the community business partner Family Read to help improve the school's Parent Education Program. The school and faculty supported the program by providing space and adult supervision for childcare while parents took classes. The goal of the classes was to increase parents' awareness of ways to strengthen their relationships with their children.

After Victory Boulevard Elementary and Family Read established their partnership, they needed to handle the challenge of providing childcare for participants. Making room for childcare and knowing who would care for the children was difficult, but the Bilingual Coordinator solved the challenge by rotating the classroom aids.

A flyer was created to announce the workshops to parents. The ten-week program met every Wednesday morning from 8:30 to 10:30. Workshop topics included:

- Multicultural Los Angeles
- Typical foods in other countries
- Customs in other countries
- Supporting and celebrating children
- Listening to both sides of a problem
- Looking for teachable values in books, T.V., and other media
- Self esteem
- Relationships

The instructor gave a variety of homework assignments like making a family collage, writing a story, reading a book every week, cutting out recipes from the newspaper, and reading with their child every day for twenty minutes.

Fifteen to twenty parents participated in Family Read Parent Workshops due to limited space. Those who participated felt encouraged and enlightened by the program. The

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topic of watching too much TV was discussed thoroughly. Some parents were not aware of television's negative effects. In response, a few parents started alternative activities with their children such as sports in local parks. Other parents discovered how much their children enjoy reading books with them and the importance of reading with their children.

Despite the small number of parents that was able to attend the workshops, other parents learned about the topics by word of mouth before and after school, from neighbors, and by attending classes at the parent center where the topics of Family Read were always shared.

Another school might like to find a community business partner to conduct a similar program. Parent-child relationships can benefit from parenting workshops.

Susana McDonald, Parent Center Director
(818) 761-4676

GRANDPARENT GATHERINGS
Windsor Hills Elementary School #087
Baltimore, Maryland

Because of changes in family structure due to death, divorce, and other life events, grandparents are often required to take on the responsibilities of parenting—parenting a second time around. The family demographics of Windsor Hill Elementary reflect this change in society. The Action Team planned activities to provide Windsor Hill's grandparents with the information and resources they need to foster a positive family structure and keep children focused on their education. The two Grandparent Gatherings also supported school improvement goals of increased attendance and achievement for students in pre-k through fifth grades and improved school climate.

The Action Team started by inviting grandparents to a special gathering in their honor. Team members made phone calls to follow up the invitations. The Grandparent Gatherings were held during the morning in the Media Center. The principal welcomed the participants, emphasizing their important role in the home-school partnership. After everyone enjoyed a continental breakfast, the school's social worker addressed the concerns of the grandparents and provided information on useful library resources. The Parent Liaison and other members of the Action Team encouraged grandparents to support one another and to continue to ask for the information and resources that would help them. Funds from Safe and Healthy Schools covered the $200 spent on breakfast.

Informal observations and a survey indicated that the 23 participants felt the information shared at the gatherings was helpful in relieving their anxiety and creating calm in school and at home. One grandparent wrote, "The discussions and ideas the grandparents speak about are very interesting. The handouts are informative. I enjoy being among other grandparents that have the same concerns that I have such as discipline, respect for others, etc." The Grandparent Gatherings encouraged the importance of the extended family and made grandparents aware of their importance in their grandchildren's education.

Matilda Pair, Parent Liaison
(410) 396-0595

KINSHIP CARE SUPPORT GROUP
Grove Park Elementary School #224
Baltimore, Maryland

Many students are raised by adults other than their natural parents. The Kinship Care Support Group provided these caregivers with opportunities to meet on a regular basis to discuss the challenges of rearing children other than their own and to share workable strategies, success stories, and failures in a confidential and empathetic setting.

After writing and receiving a grant for a kinship care support group from the local Department of Social Services, the Action Team created an inquiry flyer. The flyer went to all students' homes and asked whether the adult provided total care for a child that was not his/her own natural child or foster child. If the adult answered, "yes," they returned the form to school. The Action Team then notified caregivers about the upcoming support group. Faculty and staff members also referred caregivers to the support group.

A parent group leader conducted the one-hour support group meetings twice a month on Tuesdays. Caregivers could attend either a morning or afternoon meeting depending on their schedules. The $2000 grant covered videos, books, materials, and pamphlets.

Community members provided referrals to resources, counseling, and agencies to assist caregivers and their families. A few agencies visited the school to provide individual information, counseling, group activities, and field trips. Each caregiver received a list of local agencies provided by the Kinship Care Administrative Office.

The Kinship Care Support Group provided outreach and support to caregivers who often feel left out of programs provided for most parents. Those who attended the Kinship Care Support Group became more involved in school-related activities such as volunteering. Students benefited from the information, resources, and materials that their caregivers gained in the meetings.

Joanie Dorsey, Action Team Chair
(410) 396-0822

PARENT EDUCATION COURSE
Roscoe Elementary School
Sun Valley, California

Roscoe Elementary School's Parent Action Committee established a twelve-week parent education course to improve communication between parents and students and decrease incidents of disruptive behavior at school and home. Topics included parenting, positive discipline, high expectations, assertiveness training, and standards-based instruction.

The Parent Action Committee first conducted a two-day teacher training. Next, the committee developed the sessions and a celebration for the end of the course. Sessions used interactive facilitation such as small group instruction and cooperative learning to make the information more accessible to the parents. Parents could attend either the 8am session or the 6pm session held each Tuesday. It was challenging to track the scheduling changes and find room accommodations large enough for the number of participants.

The Parent Action Committee sent home a bulletin inviting all parents to participate in the Parent Education Course. The school also personally invited families identified through counseling and Student Success Team (SST) meetings. All parents who expressed interest in attending received weekly reminder calls.

Parents as Learning Partners covered the initial cost of $500 to purchase the materials. Other costs including copies of lessons for each participant, childcare, and refreshments were paid for by general and categorical funds.

One hundred thirty-five parents received certificates of course completion. On an end-of course evaluation form, seventy-five percent of parents reported a change in parenting techniques and correcting behaviors. One student commented that she was "proud my mom is learning at school too." Schools interested in improving student conduct, family interaction, and school climate should consider a Parent Education Course.

Curtis Johnson, SB65 Outreach Consultant
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PARENT WORKSHOPS

De Anza Junior High School

Calexico, California

The Calexico School District, located on the Mexican-United States border, is a rural community with an unemployment rate of 20-30%, a high percentage of English language learners, and families that migrate with the change in agricultural seasons. Despite these challenges, the Calexico School District has several parenting programs that exceed a 95% rate of parent participation.

The initial goals of the parenting programs were to inform parents about drugs, gangs, truancy, and other destructive behaviors in school-age children. In the past, fifteen to twenty parents attended workshops on these topics, and the staff would say, "These aren't the parents that need to be here!" Today, the goals of the parenting programs remain to improve communication between parent and child and parent and school, inform parents about the signs of serious problems in their children, and provide strategies for intervention, but Calexico School District has found an innovative way to increase parent attendance at the workshops.

Several years ago, the district added attendance at the parenting program for sixth-grade parents to a list of requirements for student participation in an end-of-year field trip. Since then, parent attendance at parenting programs has been added to graduation requirements for kindergartners and ninth graders. Parents of kindergartners attend a four-hour seminar on communication, academic support, and literacy development. Parents of sixth graders attend a four-hour seminar on communication, drugs, and gang affiliation. The workshop for parents of ninth graders focuses on communication, drugs, and sexuality. Trained teachers and counselors facilitate the sessions in both English and Spanish. All facilitators are bilingual.

Initially, parents were angry about the mandatory attendance requirement. After attending a session, however, their feedback was always positive. The parenting workshops are offered weeknights and weekends each month so there are plenty of opportunities for parents to attend. The district superintendent invites parents who have not yet attended to the last parenting class of the school year. Students whose parents do not attend the required grade-specific workshop are promoted to the next grade but do not participate in the grade-specific end-of-year event: kindergarten or ninth grade graduation ceremony or sixth grade end-of-year field trip.

At De Anza Junior High School, the Gang Intervention/Prevention Committee of parents, counselors, law enforcement, community members, and administrators plans how the parents of ninth graders will meet the parenting workshop requirement. The Committee also reviews school crime data, test scores, and parent testimonials to determine the benefits of the workshops. Decreases in violence, gangs, and graffiti have been observed, as well as increases in academic growth and test scores.

De Anza Junior High believes that supporting parenting skills and improving parents' access to resources and services benefits students by providing more structure in and out of home. As students transition through the grades in Calexico School District, parents become used to the requirement to attend parenting workshops. Because of the information presented and parents' desire to help their children, everyone benefits from participating.

Jim Shinn, LCSW, Counselor
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WATERFORD COMPUTER USAGE FOR ESL PARENT CLASS

Glenwood Elementary School

Sun Valley, California

Glenwood Elementary serves about twenty parents in its English as Second Language (ESL) Parent Class. The class meets Monday through Thursday with the ESL instructor. Twice a week, the parents work on the Waterford Early Reading Program using computers. This instruction serves a dual purpose. First, parents practice and expand upon the skills they learn in class at their own pace. Second, parents find out what their children learn when they use the Waterford Early Reading Program. Using the computer reading program helps parents improve their English skills, and, most significantly, increases their understanding of the reading program their children use every day.

To start, classrooms with computers used for the Waterford Early Reading Program needed to be identified. Two classrooms with four computers each were available for use in the afternoon. Scheduling parent visits to the classrooms revolved around times students were not receiving instruction.

The Waterford Early Reading Program has three levels of competency. Parents try to achieve the highest level, but because of time constraints often do not reach this goal. Parents may continue the program next school year to complete the program.

Parents greatly appreciate the opportunity to use the computers during class time. The strategy supports their English language skills, and increases their understanding of what their children are learning. This shared experience enables parents to support their children's learning at home.

Yvette Franco
(818) 767-6406

TYPE 2

Communicating

Communicate with families about school programs and student progress through effective school-to-home and home-to-school communications.

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ASSET BUILDING BUTTON CAMPAIGN

Sherman Elementary School

Henrietta, New York

The Asset Building Committee at Sherman Elementary School focuses its efforts on partnering with parents and the community to increase awareness about developmental assets and the important role they play in the growth and education of young people. The committee has implemented a number of practices throughout the past two years, including a button campaign promoting asset building.

Students can earn ten different buttons throughout the school year featuring assets such as cooperation, respect, tolerance, and caring. On a rotating basis, the committee distributes buttons to all teachers and staff. Along with the buttons, the committee passes out a list of ideas of things students can do to earn buttons. Children are given a button when they exhibit one of the behaviors. Teachers try to capture teachable moments, highlighting the desired behaviors they witnessed and encouraging the other students to follow along. As the students wear their buttons home and in the community, the school hopes that they will be asked about the button, thereby, giving students an opportunity to share how they earned the button.

The school's winter concert yielded another opportunity to communicate with families about the work the school is doing on developmental assets. All of the songs' themes focused on the ideas conveyed by the buttons. The students designed the ideas and props to go along with the songs such as "Cooperation." Families and community members enjoyed the concert and welcomed this opportunity to support students in their efforts.

The Asset Building Button Campaign, along with several other initiatives, has supported the overall district goal of promoting a caring school environment. The buttons have served as a rewarding communication tool to give everyone in the school community the opportunity to encourage students' character education.

Jeff McGrath, Assistant to the Principal
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BRING YOUR PARENT TO SCHOOL DAYS
Follow Through Urban Learning Laboratory
Buffalo, New York

Adapting “Bring Your Child to Work Day,” a seventh-grade student asked the principal if there could be a day when parents came to school with their kids. The principal agreed, and the school initiated “Bring Your Parent to School Days” during which parents followed their children’s schedules for the day.

The principal and the Action Team for Partnerships devised a plan to utilize the early release days that were already built into the school calendar. The team picked the first three release dates, decided to start with the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades, and drafted an invitation—all within two days time. Invitations with tear-off responses were sent home, and reminder letters and personal invitations from team members followed.

More than sixty parents spent the day. Parents filled out evaluation forms about what they expected from the day, what they liked, and what they learned. Parents reported that they learned how much education has changed in terms of teaching and testing. One parent commented, “I didn’t realize how much I’d forgotten.” Other parents said, “I learned I need to talk to my daughter more,” and “I need to go over his homework more.” Some of the parents have returned several times during the school year to spend entire days with their children.

With the success of the older grades, the team moved to intermediate grades for the second release date and primary grades for the final day. Each time, fifty to sixty parents came, and the responses were extremely positive. Parent comments from the evaluation forms included the wish that the school had scheduled the day earlier so that they could have been working all school year with their children.

Each cluster of grade levels planned different activities. Some teachers had parents do the same work the students did (even taking a quiz and physical education class), and some teachers had the parents and students make learning activities for use at home.

Although somewhat hesitant at first about parents spending the day in school, all teachers agreed that Bring Your Parent to School Days were worthwhile. They saw parent-child interactions from a different perspective. Teachers formed positive relationships with parents, and students saw that their parents were interested enough to rearrange work schedules to come to school. Student behavior and production improved after the special days. Parents learned how to help their children at home, and several volunteered in the classrooms throughout the year. Parents and teachers asked for more days like this in the future.

The cost of the program was a pot of coffee, some juice, and a ream of copy paper for invitations to parents.

Donna Kellum, Action Team Chair
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COFFEES WITH THE PRINCIPAL
Naperville North High School
Naperville, Illinois

Naperville North High School (NNHS) has had three different principal and leadership changes over the past three years. Parents and the community wanted leadership stability within the high school. The Action Team for Partnerships and the new principal helped address this need by coordinating informal coffees with the new principal hosted at parent homes in different elementary school areas. The primary goal of Coffees with the Principal was to engage as many parents as possible in a comfortable, informal setting to meet and dialogue with the new principal. Two-way communication between school and home would help families feel better about the leadership at NNHS.

In the initial registration packet mailed to NNHS families during the summer, parents were asked if they would like to attend a coffee with the new principal. Over 250 parents responded "yes." The Action Team solicited fifteen volunteer hosts by elementary school areas to make it easy and comfortable for people to attend a coffee in their own neighborhood with people they knew. Dates and times for the coffees were coordinated with the principal.

The Action Team mailed invitations to the parents who had indicated interest in the coffees and followed up personally to determine how many parents would attend each coffee. The Action Team did all the logistical legwork to make the coffees as easy as possible for the volunteer hosts. All coffees were scheduled from 7-8:30pm, but lively discussion prolonged many until 9:30pm. The initial coffees were held in mid-September, and the final coffee was held in late November. During some weeks, the principal attended two coffees on two different evenings, but usually there was one coffee a week.

Approximately 150 parents attended a coffee to meet the new principal. Some parents could not attend because of other commitments. When possible, parents who were unable to attend their neighborhood coffee had the option to go to another scheduled coffee outside their elementary school area. Some parents did take advantage of this option.

The NNHS Home and School Association paid about $100 for the paper and postage for invitations. The parent hosts donated the refreshments served during the coffees.

Coffees with the Principal had an overwhelmingly positive effect on the high school community. Parents were impressed that the principal eagerly met parents on their turf, at their convenience, with fifteen coffees on fifteen different evenings. That effort sent a strong message of sincerity and commitment to the NNHS parent community.

The principal was responsive to parents' concerns raised at the coffees. At monthly Home and School meetings, he shared any pressing issues heard from parents at the different coffees. Topics included curriculum, safety, the dress code, student parking limitations, and questions regarding the need for a school district referendum, among many others. The principal responded to one key issue expressed by forming a parent/staff/student advisory group to study and make recommendations on redefining the school's dress code and its enforcement. Although it is difficult to assess, the Action Team for Partnerships believes the Principal Coffees held in the weeks prior to a hard-fought district referendum were important in mobilizing NNHS' support. Parents established a relationship with the principal and felt more comfortable supporting a significant tax increase.

Coffees with the Principal were so successful that the Action Team for Partnerships invited parents of incoming freshmen to attend a coffee. About seventy-five parents attended three Coffees with the Principal during the month of May in parents' homes of rising ninth graders.

Coffees with the Principal played a major role in enabling Naperville North High School to achieve its goal of improving interactive two-way communication between school leadership and parents. The principal talked with parents face-to-face and shared his goals and initiatives for the upcoming school year. The parents shared their concerns directly with the principal early in the school year, and the principal responded with measures to positively impact students and staff. The coffees provided a win-win situation for all.

Sheila Sarovich, Debbie Kretzmann, and Meryl Diamond, Action Team Chairs
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COMMUNITY BREAKFAST
Colonel Ledyard/Groton Heights School
Groton, Connecticut

The Community Breakfast fostered unity in one school that is housed in two buildings. At Colonel Ledyard/Groton Heights School, pre-k through second grade is in one building, and third grade through fifth grade is housed in a second building. The two buildings share the same principal and assistant principal. The Community Breakfast invited all families and students plus community members to gather for a continental breakfast with school staff one morning before school starts. The goals of the Community Breakfast were to bring together the entire school community and to promote the school-family-community partnerships program.

School staff organized the event. First, the staff chose a convenient date and time, 8:00am to 9:30am, so that more parents would be able to attend before work. Next, staff invited all families from both school buildings, central office staff, and community members to attend the breakfast held in the Colonel Ledyard School. Youth officers, the superintendent, the mayor, board of education members, and social service representatives enjoyed breakfast with the families and students. Everyone indulged in breakfast items of donuts, danish, muffins, fruit, juice, and coffee. The informal breakfast encouraged everyone to get to know one another. In addition, the PTO set up an information table with brochures.

Raising the money to fund the Community Breakfast was a challenge. The first year, BJ Wholesale Club was a community partner, and provided most of the food. In the second year, a Pfizer Volunteer Grant and Tips for Teachers paid the $250 cost. The idea of Tips for Teachers came from another school, and involved school staff waiting tables one night at a local restaurant owned by a student's family. Teachers who could not work came for dinner and tipped the teachers. Many families from the school also ate dinner at the restaurant and contributed to the teachers' tips. Tips for Teachers raised money for the general school fund that supports activities such as the Community Breakfast.

Ninety families and their students, twenty-five community members, and twenty-five staff attended the Community Breakfast. The breakfast helped welcome all families and community members and united the two school buildings. Students could see how important their school is to the community. Parents who normally would not come to the school building were able to attend this morning event. The Community Breakfast was such a success that the event may be incorporated with a First Day Open House.

Susan Morehouse, Assistant Principal
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COMMUNITY BREAKFAST FORUM
Community School #53
Buffalo, New York

"The way a child learns cannot be separated from the way a child lives" is the motto for Community School #53. Based on this concept, the faculty and staff at Community School #53 (CS #53) strive to provide a positive learning environment, promote self-discipline, and encourage positive self-esteem so that students achieve success.

The Community Breakfast Forum was one way that the school brought together parents and community and business partners to familiarize them with school programs and the opportunities for involvement, and to help validate family and community roles in children's lives. The entire community was invited, including students, families, faculty and staff, and business partners, e.g. fraternities, sororities, NAACP Youth Group, and Families Helping Families, to the breakfasts held the fourth Saturday of each month, from 8am until 10am. Guest speakers led forums on social and curriculum-related activities.

The Community Schools Coordinator led the implementation of the Community Breakfasts. The following steps were an integral part of the organizational process:

a. Remind parents about the monthly breakfast and the topic that would be addressed via the school's parent newsletter that is delivered home by students.
b. Inform the faculty and staff about the breakfast via the faculty newsletter.
c. Send copies of both newsletters to businesses that collaborate with CS #53 so that they are informed of all school events.

Collaborating with families and the community before and during the Saturday morning breakfasts was rewarding. Families participated in the site-based team and helped choose menus and guest speakers. Workshops at the breakfast meetings emphasized the importance of children reading at home, and CS #53 complemented this message by giving a book to each family. Parents spent quality time with their children in a positive learning environment at each Saturday breakfast gathering.

The Community Schools fund, PTA fundraising efforts, and the school's collaboration with the fraternities, sororities, and community businesses paid for the Community Breakfasts.

Students benefited greatly from this program by meeting role models from the community and seeing other youngsters and parents speak and perform at the breakfast meetings. A sense of belonging developed for families and the community. The Community Breakfasts observed more families and community members participating in the breakfast as the year progressed. In the future, more workshops will be added to enhance parenting skills and improve the relationship between home and school.

Mary Ruth Morrow-Kapisak, Action Team Chair
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FAMILY-SCHOOL PICNIC SUPPER
Freedom Elementary School
Freedom, Wisconsin

Everyone has heard the saying, "Serve food and they will come." Freedom Elementary proved that this strategy continues to be successful. In September, the school hosted a family-school picnic supper immediately preceding Open House night. Nine hundred people attended and all 900 visited classrooms for Open House. This rural school has 730 students enrolled in Pre-K to Grade 5.

Planning for the picnic supper began in April of the prior school year. The Action Team for Partnerships decided to organize a kick-off event that would foster connections between parents, and between parents and the school, and that would build a positive learning environment for students. Once the idea was set, the team met with the food service director to discuss cost items and set up for the food lines. Then, in early September the team met again to work out the logistical details to ensure the evening ran smoothly.

Prior to the event, students brought home flyers advertising the upcoming Family-School Picnic Supper and Open House. Flyers included a reservation form so that the team could know how many people expected to attend.

On the night of the event, staff members greeted families at the school entrance and guided them to the multipurpose room where two food lines had formed. School board members and partnership team members served the meals and collected money. The team decided on a $1 plate charge for a meal of a hot dog, bag of chips, and a drink. This small fee enabled the school to earn about 24 cents per plate, thereby fully recovering the costs of the event and raising $200 for start-up costs for the following year's picnic supper. Students' families also contributed to the picnic by bringing condiments, paper goods, and desserts; last names beginning with A-K brought catsup, mustard, plates, and napkins while last names beginning with L-Z brought desserts. Leftover condiments were donated to the school's food service.

After receiving their meals, families ate outdoors on blankets that they brought from home. The picnic supper took place from 5:30 to 6:30, and then the Open House visits to classrooms ensued from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. Beautiful September weather made the evening perfect.

Jeanne Czech, Prinicpal
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MIDDLE SCHOOL ICE CREAM SOCIAL
Garrett Morgan Cleveland School of Science
Cleveland, Ohio

Garret Morgan invites all families to an ice cream social held within the first week of school. After the ice cream is served, students watch a movie in the auditorium while parents attend a meeting about the upcoming Academic Achievement Plan (school improvement plan). The entire staff voluntarily attends the social and uses the event as an opportunity to meet families and community members. Staff speakers address parent concerns, safety to and from school on public transportation, and other topics. The school also asks parents to register as volunteers for the Parent-Teacher-Child Club.

Each Partnership Team member has a role in the success of the Ice Cream Social. Team members develop a flyer and mail it to all families, community partners, and other schools in the region. More than twenty-seven gallons of ice cream and supplies are purchased. Team members prepare information packets, door prizes, public bus schedules, school spirit gear, and a warm welcome. The principal, counselors, and community liaison play major roles in the event's agenda. Students and parents help register visitors.

The event costs about $450 and increases with student enrollment. However, the money is well invested. The event is so successful that almost 500 people attend; often the line for ice cream stretches the entire length of the school hallway.

Hands-on presentations incorporate information that parents want with additional information they need. Those parents who cannot attend the Ice Cream Social can read about the information shared through the school newsletter. With parents' greater understanding of the school's plans, parent attendance at meetings has increased. With clear information and an outline provided at the beginning of each school year, parent volunteering has increased, student attendance is higher, parent support is visible, and the school is meeting its education goals.

Christine Story, Community Liaison
(216) 281-6188

MONTHLY LUNCHEON WITH THE PRINCIPAL

Chaska Middle Schools East and West

Chaska, Minnesota

Monthly luncheons with the principal are one of Chaska's strategies to promote two-way communication between parents and school staff to gain information, share ideas, discuss concerns, and support each other in raising and educating middle school students.

Monthly luncheons started in September and ended in May, and alternated between Wednesdays and Thursdays to offer a flexible meeting time for parents. The first half hour of the luncheon provided parents with important information, dates, and changes etc. The second half hour opened to parents' questions and concerns and to recruit parent volunteers for future events. The personal request always filled the need for parent help.

To implement the luncheon, the parent involvement coordinator secured a room. The Community Education Budget and donations from local stores funded food, beverages and utensils. Staff advertised the luncheon in the school newsletter mailed home to parents.

An average of ten parents attended each luncheon; some parents attended more than one. In all, 143 parents participated in the luncheons during the year. The principal and assistant principal attended. Sometimes the Dean of Students or counselor participated.

Participating parents expressed that they felt more connected to their children's school. Parents received useful information and validation that other parents shared many of their concerns. Staff better understood students when they heard parent's perspectives. Parents reported that it was nice to meet the principal on a warm and friendly basis.

Middle school parents spend their evenings shuttling their children to extracurricular activities. Luncheon meetings were a good time for working and non-working parents to attend a Chaska Middle School activity.

Lori Juelich, Parent Involvement Coordinator
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MUSICAL MOTIVATION FOR TEST-TAKING

Hardy Elementary School

Chattanooga, Tennessee

Artists in the local music industry lent their talents and inspiration to motivate students at Hardy Elementary School to aim high on the state standardized tests. They created a song that became such a hit that it had to be shared with the ten other underperforming schools in Hamilton County.

A study of Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program scores released a year ago showed that Hamilton County students declined slightly in the areas of reading, language, science, and social studies over a three-year period. Sixth graders posted lower percentile scores in every subject than they had as fourth and fifth graders. Reading scores dropped in every grade level with nearly all falling below the national percentile median. The 1999-2000 Terra Nova test revealed Hardy Elementary was 1.5 to 2.5 years behind in reading and language.

To combat test anxiety a slogan, chant or song was suggested to rally the students, parents and teachers toward a common goal of student success during Terra Nova state testing. Mr. Valitus F. Edwards Sr. coined the phrase, "We Won't Stop (Until We Get to the Top)," to get the process started. In addition to being the Curriculum Support Specialist at Hardy, Mr. Edwards sings with a group called Love, Peace & Happiness. The group's guitarist, Frederick McIntosh, transformed the mental vision into a musical interpretation. From there the keyboard player, David Woods, added his musical genius to make the crude lyrics appealing to both students and parents. Mr. Woods was able to cut production costs seventy-five percent by doing a lot of the recording in his home studio. Ralph Chislom, who owns RC Recording and Production Studio, took a substantial cut from his usual charge to polish up the song and give it commercial appeal. The vocalists for the group, Lutrell Brown, Kenneth Parks, and Mr. Edwards performed the vocals under the direction of Mr. Woods.

Hardy's principal and several teachers received a copy of the CD. They enjoyed the song so much that they asked Mr. Edwards to perform the song during a school program. The school provided a CD of the song and a lyric sheet to all of the teachers at Hardy with instructions for them use it in the classroom as a motivational tool.

Hardy's business partner, Palo Duro Records agreed to offer each Hardy student a free CD. Even more, they gave free CDs to all students attending the other ten underperforming schools in Hamilton County. Palo Duro Records duplicated 5000 free CDs and distributed them to students before the state testing.

It was hoped that a song with a positive message could be acted out in a positive way. "We Won't Stop (Until We Get to the Top)" was written to motivate students to look inside themselves to define their personal success. The song states, "You want to be the best that you can be, ... look inside yourself, motivation is the key."

A first-grade teacher at Hardy said, "I discussed with my students the meaning behind the song. As a team, students and staff aren't going to stop giving their best until we raise our test scores. We played the CD to get us motivated and 'pumped.'"

Woodmore Elementary School principal described, "We planned an entire week of motivational and inspirational activities to encourage our students to open their full reservoir of energy and knowledge. The CD, "We Won't Stop (Until We Get to the Top)" was played daily during our pretest time. The students loved it! Parents came to school commenting on how their children were never before so motivated for the test. They informed me that everyone in the family was singing "We Won't Stop." We expect to get to the top. We want to adopt the song as our school song."

Woodmore Elementary had a writing contest about what the song meant to the students. Students wrote:

- "I like the song, and my family too. I especially liked it during Terra Nova because it got me motivated. It gets my mom ready for work in the morning. Every morning I wake up the first thing I hear is..."We Won't Stop!" It's a real heart warmer and motivator."

- "Mr. Edwards, I admire that song to death. I listen to it just about every day. It encourages me to go to school and work hard, and get good grades.
- "My goal for me is to make my family proud. The top for me is to become what I want to be without having to do wrong things in my life."

According to one Hardy Elementary student, "I might not be the best, but I can try. When we were taking the Terra Nova test on mathematics I thought about this song and it made me feel good. If you hear this song it will make you feel like your life got easier." Parents saw the changes: "The CD affected my two children. Instead of the tension that can go with testing, they were filled with a sense of achievement and accomplishment."

"We Won't Stop (Until We Get to the Top)" is an innovative communication tool that connects students, teachers, and parents around the common goal of raising test scores. The motivational music creates positive feelings towards assessment and achievement.

Note: CDs may be purchased by sending a $10 check or money order to: We Won't Stop Fund, 3511 East Crest Drive, Chattanooga TN, 37406.

Valitus F. Edwards, Sr., Curriculum Support Specialist
(423) 493-0301

"We Won't Stop (Until We Get to the Top)"
By Valitus F. Edwards and David Woods

Chorus:
We won't stop, we won't stop,
We won't stop until we get to the top.
We won't stop, we won't stop,
We won't stop, until we get to the top.

1st Verse:
Now don't you ever stop, until you reach the top
Keep this notion with your motion
Don't you ever let it drop.
I know you want to be the best that you can be,
Let me tell you from the start
Motivation is the key.
Just keep the faith inside you, control your destiny.
Take advantage of your chances and every opportunity.
You want to know what you can do
To make your dreams come true?
Keep your head up to the sky
And it will come to you.

Chorus:

2nd Verse:
Now don't ever let them tell you - what you can never be.
Don't ever listen to any negativity.
There are those in darkness who think that they are lost.
There are those who say a bridge cannot be crossed.
Some will often tell you what you can never achieve
Don't you ever pay them no mind as long as you believe.
I know you want to be the best that you can be
Let me tell you from the start,
Motivation is the key.

Chorus:

Bridge:
You can be anything you want to be
Don't limit yourself to any small degree
Just be determined, when you make up your mind.
Success is waiting for you,
Success is what you'll find.

Narrative:
You want to be the best that you can be,
Then make be what you want to see.
What you need, if you're asking me.
Look inside yourself
Motivation is the key.
You want to know what you can do,
If you want to make all those dreams come true.
You can control your destiny
Look inside yourself
Motivation is the key.

Chorus:

Fade........

PARENT INFORMATION BOOTH
Armínta Elementary School
North Hollywood, California

One of the Site Action Team's goals was to increase parent attendance at workshops and activities beyond the same consistent group of parents. After a lot of brainstorming, the team decided to create a Parent Information Booth that would get the word out to parents about the variety of workshops available.

The Site Action Team selected the brochures, fact sheets, and other communication pieces to include in the booth. Flyers about school workshops, community activities, and district parenting classes also were included. The Parent Information Booth was available at all major school events such as Open House, Back to School Night, and music festivals. The booth consisted of several tables decorated with welcoming signs in English and Spanish, balloons, and poster displays of previous Action Team events. The team designed the booth to have a carnival-like look to peak families' interest. Team members and community representatives rotated coverage of the booth so that two or three people were there during the entire event. At each Action Team meeting, members discussed how to improve the Parent Information Booth for future events.

While attending school events, hundreds of parents stopped by the Parent Information Booth to learn about workshops, volunteering, and other partnership activities. Some parents signed up for workshops or to volunteer at the booth. The consistency of the booth's presence at all major school functions helped families and community members know where to get important information in a friendly setting.

Michelle Brent, Action Team Coordinator
(818) 765-5911

PROVIDING INFORMATION TO PARENTS
Colerain High School
Cincinnati, Ohio

Colerain High School's PTA identified a communication problem for the school and its families. Important school policies and procedures were listed in the students' daily planners, but when students were at school, parents could not check procedures. In addition, the PTA wanted to revise their brochure to include more information about Colerain High. The PTA contacted the Action Team for Partnerships, and they joined together on two strategies to improve families' access to important school information.

As the team revised the PTA brochure to include staff contacts, attendance procedures, schedules, and voicemail, they realized a tri-fold brochure could not fit all of the needed information. They created a parent handbook to provide more detailed information beyond the brochure. The parent handbook included information about the school calendar, important dates, staff contacts, attendance, academic programs, the career center, school and community partnerships, student dress code, and student code of conduct.

The PTA sent the tri-fold brochure to all Colerain families. The school distributed the parent handbook to parents at Open House and conference nights, and to new students at the time of enrollment. Students brought copies of the handbook to their families if they had not attended Open House or a conference night.

The PTA paid for the printing costs of the tri-fold brochure. The Action Team for Partnerships used award money from the Ohio Department of Education to print the parent handbook.

Parents refer to the handbook as their "Bible." The joint effort between Colerain's PTA and Action Team for Partnerships has given families the important information they need in publications produced just for them.

Rose Marie Fromme, Action Team Chair
(513) 385-6424

REACHING OUT
Colvin Elementary School
Wichita, Kansas

Colvin Elementary is a high poverty, diverse community with families that speak many languages and do not necessarily know how to navigate the school system. The school uses a variety of strategies to break down walls between the home and school and make a diverse group of families feel welcomed and needed at their community school.

Staff reaches out to families through different communication practices. The staff walks through the neighborhood and knocks on doors to meet families. Each family receives eight positive face-to-face communications about their child during the school year. Staff serve coffee every Friday morning on the driveway before school starts so they can greet parents as they bring their children to school. Parent handbooks have been provided in video format in five different languages, and translators are always on site to assist parents.

Additionally, a parent room is open each day for networking, parent education, and adult education. A nursery and meals are provided to enable parents to attend parent room activities. Some days four or five moms use the parent room to complete volunteer work for teachers. Other days there might be forty to fifty parents in the parent room for a workshop. Three to four hundred parents might visit the parent room to receive learning materials being distributed as part of parent-teacher conference day.

Beyond communication and information, the school reaches out to families by helping them to meet their basic needs. The Family Support Team at Colvin Elementary works with families in crisis by making home visits every Monday. The team focuses first on improving attendance, providing resources and referrals for health needs, and improving student behavior through family support. On-site facilities for health care service and WIC is established. Team members work with families to teach them the hidden rules of school success, especially those regarding attendance and behavior.

Colvin Elementary's efforts to reach out to its families have been productive. Student achievement and attendance have increased dramatically. Fifteen percent of students were reading on or above grade level in 1997; now 75% of students are on or above grade level. Attendance has increased from 90% to 95%. Suspensions have dropped from 113 per year to thirteen. Parent involvement has increased dramatically with parent-teacher conference attendance rates now at 99%. Parents frequently visit the parent room, prepare all classroom instructional materials, and represent the school before the Board of Education and the Assistant Superintendent. By reaching out to families, the school is building a partnership that supports student success.

GwenCarol Holmes, Principal
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SPRING FAIR
Park West High School
New York, New York

High school students travel from all five boroughs of New York City to attend Park West High School, which implements the Talent Development Comprehensive School Reform Model. Park West hosted a Spring Fair to showcase their career academy programs and activities for incoming ninth graders. The fair also served as an end-of-year celebration for student clubs and community-based organizations. The Action Team for Partnerships wanted the fair to inform everyone about the positive programs at the high school and to increase collaboration with teachers, parents, students, and community partners.

The Action Team for Partnerships started planning for the Spring Fair by conducting a student survey. At a series of meetings, team members discussed the students' ideas and determined which ones could be implemented at the fair. The team determined a timetable, delegated tasks, and discussed ways to include parents, students, and community members. Over 150 ninth grade students signed up to volunteer for the day.

Responsibilities were divided so that each fair activity had a coordinator. Students, teachers, and parents helped the coordinators develop the activities. They also planned games for siblings. Fair participants could take guided tours of the school to learn about the different career academies such as Hospitality, Medical Tech, Vertical Transportation, and the Physical Education Department. Clubs and community-based organizations set up tables to provide information about their activities and services. Students read their poems and shared their thoughts about the writing process. In-house theater groups presented performances, sang songs, and performed comedy routines.

The ninth-grade students prepared all the food for the fair. Hospitality Academy students taught non-academy students how to chop, dice, flavor, and create delicious dishes for over 500 people. The menu, developed by the students, included plantains, curried goat, rice, and beans, collard greens, fried chicken, and many other items. All of the foods reflected the ethnic diversity of Park West's community. Students served lunch on the school's rooftop. The culinary students donned chef hats and uniforms and served the food like professionals. Beautiful weather and an unbeatable view of lower Manhattan contributed to a wonderful meal.

The fair cost about $3,000 and was funded by the 21st Century Learning Centers. The biggest expenses were food and postage for invitations. Over 500 students, parents, and community members attended the Spring Fair. The feedback was so encouraging that Park West plans to host another fair in October to welcome parents and students to the school. The fairs create a sense of community and promote a positive image for the school.

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STRATEGIES TO INFORM EVERYONE
Harborside Middle School
Milford, Connecticut

The Action Team for Partnerships at Harborside Middle School offered many parent workshops in order to reach as many parents as possible. Due to parents' busy schedules, the Action Team found it challenging to get parents to attend the presentations. The Action Team for Partnerships addressed this challenge by implementing several ways to get the presentation information to those families who could not come.

Team members created links on their School/Family/Community Partnerships website to articles pertaining to monthly topics presented at school. They also included a monthly reading list of books that addressed the topics. The team sent home a reading list of books parents could obtain from their parent library. Parents were invited to come in and browse the library at their leisure, or they could have their child bring the books home for them.

The Action Team for Partnerships video taped and audio taped all presentations. If parents had a schedule conflict with the school presentation but wanted the information, they could check out the videos to watch at home or the audiocassettes to listen to while driving in their cars to work or running errands.

Staff members and administrators who conducted the presentations were willing to meet with parents or community members to discuss the workshop or provide additional information. Presenters also offered to help parents implement any strategy discussed in the presentations. This assistance could be face-to-face, by telephone, or through e-mail.

Haborside's Action Team for Partnerships did not stop holding workshops because of low attendance rates. Instead, they found several ways to provide the information to the families who could not attend. By using their website, videotapes, and audiocassettes, the information could be accessed for years to come.

Lori Hart, Action Team Chair
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THANKSGIVING DINNER
Stettin Elementary School
Wausau, Wisconsin

Planning a Thanksgiving dinner? Why not invite 500 people to feast with you? That is exactly what Stettin Elementary School did. One week before Thanksgiving, students, extended families, school faculty and staff, administrators, and school board members came together to prepare and partake in a delicious Thanksgiving feast celebrating unity.

The newly constructed school building had doubled in size to 280 enrolled students when three local schools merged into one. To foster a sense of togetherness in this new school community, Stettin Elementary expanded the traditional Thanksgiving dinner from the former school to now reach close to 100% of its families.

The Thanksgiving Dinner expressed to students what can be accomplished if everyone helps just a little. The Action Team for Partnerships with staff and parents planned the event and arranged volunteers to cook and serve. The Parent Teacher Organization provided $300 to help buy food and supplies, and community members and businesses donated most of the rest. Each family brought one dish to share at the dinner. A corps of volunteers, children, and available staff set up the tables, chairs, décor, and serving lines, and pitched in for clean up afterwards. In all, the amount of time, food, supplies, and decorations shared by everyone was incredible.

The students played a significant role in the preparation and presentation of the dinner. Through the curriculum, students learned about the history of harvesting food and the experiences of the early settlers to North America. Each class decorated orange paper placemats describing what they were thankful for and those placements were randomly placed on the dinner tables. In their art classes, students made centerpieces, candle holders, and banners for display. Each class prepared a portion of the main dishes including the turkeys to be eaten that night. Also, a selected group of older students worked with the guidance counselor on a ten-minute program about family togetherness and thankfulness that was presented right before the meal. Because students were so involved in the process, they enthusiastically encouraged their parents to attend. Following the Thanksgiving Dinner, students wrote and sent thank-you letters to the community businesses that donated food and supplies.

The attendance of five hundred people was truly inspiring. Most classes reported 100% attendance, and others only missed one or two students and families, most due to illness. School board members, the crossing guard, retired teachers, building aides, and families of school staff all came together to enjoy this meal with students and their families. The evaluation attached to the school newsletter generated positive responses from all.

The Thanksgiving Dinner met its goal of building a new climate of partnerships between families, students, the school, and community. The Action Team is already cooking up plans for next year's dinner, which expects even more people!

Lynn Carr-Berry, Family and School Liaison
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WORK/ACHIEVEMENT SURVEY
Glenmary School
Peace River, Alberta, Canada

Glenmary School wants students to have a healthy balance between work, school, and extracurricular and social activities. The school's academic goal is that all twelfth-grade students graduate with a minimum of four twelfth-grade-level courses in order to be prepared for postsecondary programs. However, there was growing concern among administrators and educators that students who work part-time jobs work too many hours a week to complete homework, get adequate rest, and/or prepare for mid-terms and final exams. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) designed a survey to find out the relationship between work and achievement for Glenmary students. They also reviewed research literature about the relationship of work and achievement to inform students, parents, teachers, and the business community.

Ninth- through twelfth-grade students completed the survey. The ATP tallied and analyzed the results for any pattern of relationships between work and achievement. The District Coordinator located the relevant research and summarized the results for the school. Glenmary's results were compared with the research, and these results along with the school's concerns were published in the school newsletter mailed home to 325 families. The school mailed a letter including the same information and an exam schedule to eighty businesses in the community who employed or might employ students. The ATP created a poster and gave it to each teacher to discuss with students and post in classrooms. They also presented the survey results and relevant research at parent information evenings for tenth and eleventh grades.

The research reviewed by Glenmary showed that part-time work that does not exceed 15-20 hours per week could be an academic advantage for students. Survey results showed that 32% of Glenmary students who do not work and 31% of students who work less than 20 hours per week maintained an 80% or better grade point average (GPA). This was a 6% increase of students over those students who work 20 or more hours a week. Forty-six percent of Glenmary students who work 20 or more hours per week have a 60% or lower GPA. Analyses also showed that at least 80% of students spent their earnings on wants, not needs. For those working 20 or more hours per week, decreased academic achievement is a high price to pay for employment that is not needed to pay for necessary expenses.

Students benefited from this practice by gaining important information to help them minimize the effects of working on their academic progress and futures. A ninth-grade student who had seen the poster said she would use the information when making decisions about working during the school year.

Parents expressed an interest in the survey and its findings. Parents found the information valuable in setting limits for their teens who work or are thinking of getting a part-time job. Parents commented that the information promoted discussions with their teens about finding a balanced lifestyle that might not have taken place if the newsletter article had not been written.

An employer responded to the letter stating, "As an employer of high school age youth and a strong supporter of education, I take the results of your survey very seriously. I will be sure to keep the hours worked by students to fewer than 20 hours per week. I hope all employers take this information seriously, as working while in school affects us all."

The Work/Achievement Survey was inexpensive to conduct. The greatest challenge was tallying the results from the survey because it was time consuming. Student, parent, and community business response has been so positive that the Action Team for Partnerships will attend a Chamber of Commerce meeting in September 2002 to go over the information again and to hand out exam schedules for the 2002-2003 school year. It has also been proposed to write an article for the newspaper. Glenmary School intends to administer the survey again to see if results have changed, and write an article about the findings for the local newspaper.

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TYPE 3

Volunteering

Improve recruitment, training, work, and schedules to involve families as volunteers and audiences at the school or in other locations to support students and school programs.

CALLING ALL MALES
Clover Street School
Windsor, Connecticut

Every year it is difficult to recruit enough parents to volunteer for the library, classrooms, and other activities. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) worked to solve this challenge by reaching out to an untapped source—fathers and other male relatives. The goal was to involve men in the learning community and provide opportunities for them to be role models for students. Men participating in school activities also would help break the stereotype that only mothers volunteer and monitor student progress.

Clover Street sent a flyer to all students' homes announcing the formation of a men's committee to support their children's education. Meeting dates were scheduled for two times per month to start.

Several dads attended the first meeting. An icebreaker activity asked participants to introduce themselves and answer the following questions about their children: "(1) Who are some of your child's role models? (2) What is your child's favorite food? (3) What is your child's favorite color? (4) What does your child enjoy doing most?" The first meeting also included research on the benefits of parent involvement, a parenting article, and a research article on parent-child interaction and literacy.

The men brainstormed ideas for family activities so that they would have ownership of their volunteer efforts. They formed sub-committees based on the activities to be implemented. Logistics and details of the activities were coordinated with two members of the Action Team.

The fathers implemented three activities. The first activity the dads planned was for the winter holidays. They dressed up as Santa and distributed cookies to students during each lunch wave. The second activity was Ron-A-Roll, a family fun event on a Saturday afternoon at a local skating rink. The dads donated to participants McDonald's dollar meal cards that they had solicited. Two hundred and twenty parents, students, staff, siblings, and other family members enjoyed the family fun so much that they asked if Ron-A-Roll could be an annual event.

The final activity that the dads planned was a Family Fun Night of three rotating activities. The event, held on a Monday evening from 6:30-8:30pm, included bowling and the opportunity to play basketball with three Central Connecticut State University basketball players. One hundred and fifty people attended the Family Fun Night.

Funding and scheduling meetings were a challenge. The principal provided seed money to get the men's committee started. Proceeds raised from the Ron-A-Roll repaid the seed money and funded the Family Fun Night. To address scheduling challenges, ATP members made reminder calls about meetings. Everyone did their best to be productive with those who could attend.

Clover Street students were very enthusiastic about the involvement of their dads and male relatives. Students did their homework and schoolwork to make sure that everyone did their part to attend a family activity. Teachers and their families participated in the events, which encouraged a more positive view of the teachers. Teachers also saw families working and having fun together.

Next year, the activities will be planned so that they can be on the school calendar earlier. More participation by dads and male relatives will be encouraged. One thought is to have dads greet students at the main door in the morning. As John Finn stated, "Most men have no idea the impact they can have on children, but research shows that male role models are a critical ingredient in the learning process."

Gloria Cicero, Principal
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DROP-IN MATH TUTORING CLINICS

Vena Avenue Elementary School

Arleta, California

Student and parent participation in the after-school math tutoring clinics at Vena Avenue Elementary School multiplied during the fourteen-week program. The school designed the daily math tutoring clinics to help students master basic math skills and to familiarize parents with the math curriculum and strategies. These two components added up to successful drop-in math tutoring clinics for all.

Implementation of the program was a two-step process. First, the school set up three drop-in math tutoring clinics open every day for one hour after school: one for first and second grade students; one for multiplication skills; and one for upper grade skills. Teachers referred students, or students referred themselves, to the clinics for help with specific math skills based on difficulties they were currently having in the classroom. The clinics focused on mastering basic skills necessary to succeed in math, and did not serve as a homework clinic. This strategy proved beneficial for participating students.

Once the clinics ran smoothly, parents were personally invited to attend the clinics with their children. Parents sat with their children as the tutors showed them both how to use the manipulatives, games, and other activities. The hands-on materials and simple strategies that they could duplicate at home fascinated parents. Some parents were learning the math right along with their children. Students and parents enjoyed their time together, and parents got the chance to see their children succeeding at learning. In turn, the students felt a sense of pride that their parents cared enough to sit with them in a school setting.

Student attendance at the math tutoring clinics became a challenge because the number of children wanting to participate swamped the program. The clinics expanded from one room initially to three rooms in order to accommodate the number of children and to be able to differentiate instruction. An average of twenty students participated daily in the primary skills room, fifteen in the multiplication room, and ten to fifteen in the upper grades room. The school math coach, the program coordinator, teachers, teaching assistants, some parents, and high schools students all assisted with the program. The high school students volunteered to tutor as part of their community service requirement for graduation.

The fourteen-week daily math tutoring clinics cost about $7000 to operate. School improvement funds, bilingual and compensatory education funds, and some grant money were used to purchase materials and compensate tutors. The program coordinators also utilized math manipulatives that had been stored away in cabinets at the school. Lots of materials enabled tutors to try a variety of strategies to help students acquire math concepts that they lacked.

Vena Elementary School's drop-in math tutoring clinics were successful for students and parents. Classroom teachers reported noticeable math progress by participating students. Parents described the opportunity to learn with their children as valuable, and many parents have already requested that the program expand next year. In fact, the program will continue next year, and parents will be involved in the program's planning and preparation as well. Inviting parents to attend math tutoring with students earns an A+.

Ann Wilcox, Program Coordinator
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ENVIRONMENTAL DAY IN THE PARK

Dr. Charles R. Drew Science Magnet School

Buffalo, New York

The location of the Dr. Charles R. Drew Science Magnet School is unique. It is located in the heart of an urban setting, adjacent to a large city park, and attached to the Buffalo Museum of Science. The curriculum followed in the Drew Science Magnet School places a strong emphasis on science. Environmental Day in the Park capitalized on this unique setting and core curriculum.

Throughout the year, students in first through sixth grades participated in cross-curricular projects about the park. They observed and recorded positive and negative effects on the park's environment. At various times, parents accompanied students to the park to help gather and record information. Several classes collected litter at different times during the year and sorted the litter into recyclable and waste materials. They drew conclusions about how people affect the health of the park. Other classes observed the park's wildlife. They recorded observations of animal tracks, sightings of seasonal animals, and their habitats. Parents were encouraged to make connections between classroom projects and everyday life.

On April 26, 2002, all parents were invited to spend the day at school with their children to culminate this yearlong project. Parents accompanied the students to the park and participated in Environmental Day activities. Several classes presented skits that followed the environmental theme.

In addition, students received Reading is Fundamental books on Environmental Day that centered on the theme "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, and READ!" Students made individual posters that reflected the theme. After participating in activities focused on environment, all students in first through third grades selected a book to take home. Parents who attended helped their children select books. Integrating books, families, and environmental issues reinforced to students that their daily lives are connected to the world in many ways.

The Buffalo Museum of Science displayed the Environmental Day class projects on its first floor for parents and the general public to view during the rest of the school year. The museum also gave all families who participated in Environmental Day free family memberships to the Buffalo Museum of Science. The combination of setting, curriculum, and parents created a wonderful experience for students throughout the school year.

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FALL HARVEST POTLUCK
Patagonia Elementary School
Patagonia, Arizona

Students and staff at Patagonia Elementary School welcomed parents, family, friends, and community members to the second annual Fall Harvest Potluck Dinner one evening from 5:30-7:30 p.m. This celebration culminated the students' twelve-week fall harvest unit. Students performed, families viewed student projects, and everyone enjoyed food and a bonfire. The school-family-community event showcased student learning.

At 5:15 p.m., students sounded the Old Main bell to welcome guests. The pre-k and kindergarten students opened the evening by performing a 15-minute play. Guests dined on turkey dinners provided by the Parent Teacher Club and a variety of dishes brought by the families. Following dinner, students sang, and the fourth graders performed a play. The evening culminated with presentations and displays of student work in the classrooms.

The event involved extra work for the staff, but teamwork made it manageable and well worth it. Staff delegated responsibilities to cover logistics such as advertising, setup, serving, and cleanup. The school advertised the event in the newspaper and through flyers posted around town. Students did much of the work by preparing their projects, making invitations, helping to setup, and performing at the event. A local supermarket donated four turkeys. Volunteers assisted on the day of the event as well. The Arizona Community Foundation supported the Fall Harvest Potluck with a $500 grant.

The Fall Harvest Potluck was an excellent opportunity for students to share with their families and community the work they did throughout the fall. Students loved sharing their projects for such a large audience. The event created a lot of good energy between the school, families, and the community around student learning. Patagonia Elementary School plans to build on the event's success by strengthening two other school-family-community events celebrating students' completion of learning units.

Erin E. Ross
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FAMILY GYM NIGHTS
Good Shepherd School
Peace River, Alberta, Canada

Good Shepherd's Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) created Family Gym Nights to provide an opportunity for families to participate in healthy activities together, feel comfortable in the school, and assist their children as healthy active students at home. All activity nights invited students to attend with at least one parent.

Team members decided to hold a Family Gym Night for each grade during the school year. Promotion took place by using the school calendar and newsletter, hanging up posters around school, sending a smaller version of the poster home with students three to five days before the event as a reminder, and having teachers remind the targeted grade's students to write down the date in their school agendas/day-timers. The local radio stations also announced the events on their community calendars.

For grades one through four Family Gym Nights, the gym was set up in a station format with pylons dividing the space into sections. Posters with game instructions hung around the gym so that families could be self-directed through the various stations. Upon completing an activity, families brought their record sheets, used to chart their progress through the stations, to the registration table to receive stickers, pencils, and a Smart Start Canada Food Guide to take home. Everyone went home with a *Handbook for Healthy Active Living* from the district coordinator or easy-to-make-and-do activities that could be done as a family.

The grades one through three Family Gym Nights incorporated stations using hula-hoops, beanbags, skipping ropes, basketballs, and a separate group activity using balance boards. The posters gave five challenges to try (e.g., "How many times can you toss the bean bag with your left hand/ your right hand?") and an opportunity to develop a special trick at that station. The fourth grade Family Gym Night had a theme of "Goofy Olympics" because the event took place in February just after the Winter Olympics. The Goofy Olympics had ten non-competitive activity stations to visit like Feather Fun, Family Skipping, and The Rubber Boot Jump.

For the fifth- and sixth-grade Family Gym Nights, the theme was "Jungle Fever" a la Survivor. After a warm-up activity, which was developed and led by one of the sixth-grade students and her mother, the families divided into two tribes. After thinking of a tribe name and designing a poster, the two tribes played a lively game of "Capture the Coconut," a version of Capture the Flag. Two palm trees were home base, and the object of the game was to snag the other tribe's three coconuts without being tagged. If a person was tagged, he/she was taken to that tribe's jail, only to be freed by a tribe member wearing a special immunity necklace (a plastic lei).

Action Team members enthusiastically supported and staffed the event. One staff member supervised students writing thank-you cards to people who helped make Family Gym Nights a success. Staff and parents set up the reception area and the gym. All families helped with cleanup at the end of the events. Other assistance came from: community partners like the radio station that helped by advertising the events free of charge; the public division high school that lent equipment and decorations like the palm trees for Jungle Fever night; and the local convenience store that donated treats for the students to enjoy after the activity.

Students had a blast at each Family Gym Night. They had the chance to engage in healthy and fun activities with their moms, dads, siblings, and even some grandparents. Some moms and dads were surprised that they could not just come along and read a book on the sidelines! About twenty to thirty families attended the events, and some parents had never been to school before with their child. Families spent quality time together, in the hopes of kick starting or reinforcing healthy active lifestyles.

In the future, Good Shepherd plans to have a parent team from each grade assist with each grade's Family Gym Night. Parent and student evaluations will be formalized. The telephone answering message also will be used to promote upcoming activities.

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HEALTHY SNACK PROGRAM
St. Stephen's Catholic School
Valleyview, Alberta, Canada

A healthy lifestyle is one of the improvement goals at St. Stephen's, which educates students in kindergarten through ninth grade. The staff recognized that not all children came to school with enough lunch to provide them with a mid-morning snack. The snack program hypothesized that if students received better nutrition, they would stay on task, pay more attention, produce neater work, and complete more assignments in class. Through partnerships with family and community members, the snack program provided nutritious snacks for all students every Monday.

To implement the snack program, the Action Team for Partnerships first solicited funding and donations from community organizations and businesses. Six local companies donated money, and different grocers donated food. These community partners included: Rio Alto, Hopkin Oilfield Enterprises, Ray W. Oilfield Maintenance, Kei's Wellsite Supervision, Royal Purple, and Schnider's Meats, among others.

Next, the Action Team sent home notes to recruit parent and grandparent volunteers to assist with the snack program, and they promoted the program at Parent Council. The parent and grandparent volunteers helped prepare the variety of snacks such as apples, carrot sticks, dried fruit, granola bars, meat and cheese, strawberries, yogurt, mini bagels, and crackers and cheese. Every Monday morning between 9:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. the volunteers distributed the snacks to students. It is important to note that students were surveyed to find out what kind of snacks they would enjoy. About ninety percent of the students enjoyed the weekly snack selections.

The weekly snack has helped educate students about healthy eating. It also has had a positive impact on behavior. The Action Team plans to continue this strategy next year and increase community support so that snacks can be provided more than once a week.

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INCENTIVE NIGHTS
Early Childhood Center #17
Buffalo, New York

Winters in Buffalo can be brutal. To warm things up, the Early Childhood Center #17 threw a Beach Party Bingo Night in January for students and families. The night was one of four incentive nights held quarterly throughout the school year to give students, families, and school staff an opportunity to work together in a fun environment reinforcing a skill. Everyone enjoyed the Incentive Night themes of autumn harvest, beach party bingo, critters and creatures, and Hawaiian luau.

Each Incentive Night included four fun learning stations: arts and crafts, music and movement, video and storytelling, and games. Starting at 6:00 p.m., students and families participated in the schedule of activities, rotating stations every twenty minutes until the event ended at 7:30. The pre-k to grade 2 teachers invited six students from each class to attend each Incentive Night. This small group strategy allowed each child and family more individualized attention during activities. The final Incentive Night included all students and families.

At Beach Party Bingo Night, students, families, and staff enjoyed a variety of bingo games (color, word, math, etc.); learned to make sun hats out of paper plates; exercised their bodies in volleyball, over/under relays, and hula hoops; and listened to beach-related storybooks. Parents, teachers, and other school staff volunteered to lead the activity stations.

Collaboration made the Incentive Nights a success. Each member of the Incentive Night Team assumed responsibility for different tasks, and other staff members could volunteer by including their names on the sign-up sheet placed on the main bulletin board. Volunteer request letters were sent home to parents. Those parents who responded received a personal phone call from the activity chairperson thanking the parent for his/her assistance and providing details of what he/she would be expected to do. This personal touch helped increase the number of parent volunteers.

Since about 95% of the students are bussed to school, transportation was a concern. The Parent Teacher Organization helped meet this challenge by organizing a car pool for those parents who did not have transportation. As a result, more families and students participated in the activities.

In total, the four Incentive Nights cost approximately $600. School funds, PTO, community businesses, and parents and staff paid for the expenses. Next year, the school will seek additional funding sources to expand Incentive Nights to a monthly event with even more activities.

The Incentive Night program was a rewarding experience for the entire school community. Businesses became involved with the school. Parents and other caregivers learned about early childhood curriculum. School staff got to know parents in a relaxed setting. Students reinforced their academic skills, developed social skills, and interacted with family members around learning activities.

Barbara Clark, Principal
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LUNCH BUNCH
Cloud Elementary School
Wichita, Kansas

In order for children to improve their reading, they must read regularly. The Lunch Bunch program at Cloud Elementary ensures that each student in grades 1-5 reads with an adult for twenty minutes every day. Parent, community, and older student volunteers spend their lunchtime reading with children whose families are not able to read with them at home.

Each of the 800 students at Cloud Elementary has a weekly reading form that goes home daily. When students come to school with their reading forms unsigned, the teacher signs them up for Lunch Bunch. After the students have eaten lunch, they go to Lunch Bunch where they read one-on-one with an adult, or in small groups when the number of volunteers is limited. The volunteer then signs the weekly reading form and returns the form to the classroom teacher. For the most part, children enjoy attending Lunch Bunch; it is seen as an opportunity, not a punishment.

Approximately twenty-five to thirty children attend Lunch Bunch Tuesday through Friday. The schedule rotates by grade level with rotations occurring every twenty-five minutes. Each day, four to ten adult volunteers read with students, and a staff person assists when volunteers are not available. Also, fifth-grade students volunteer to read with the first-grade students and fill in for adult volunteers. In fact, two fifth-grade boys volunteered about two times per week.

School staff members contact parents when their children regularly attend Lunch Bunch mainly to inform parents that their children are having someone read to them on a daily basis. Some parents may not have been aware that twenty minutes of daily reading was part of each child's homework, and after a parent-teacher conference, the child comes to school each day with their reading homework completed. However, in some cases, either the parent does not have the English skills to read with the child or the home does not have the structure for regular reading. Lunch Bunch is designed specifically for those children so that, no matter what, reading is a supported priority.

Being able to provide a variety of reading materials has proved challenging for Lunch Bunch. About $2000-$3000, from grants, Title I and general funds, and fundraisers, has been spent on books and other reading materials. The school continues to seek sources to build its lending library so that it can share an array of books with students.

Because of Lunch Bunch, all students at Cloud Elementary receive support from their school, parents, community, and fellow students to read twenty minutes every day. They learn the values and pleasures of reading, they improve their reading skills and comprehension, and they develop lifelong habits as readers.

Carla B. Smith, Principal
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MALES 'R' US RECOGNITION DAY AND FAMILY PICNIC
Bilingual Early Childhood Center #36
Buffalo, New York

Parents, teachers, staff and children gathered in a park across from the school to honor fathers and significant male figures in children's lives and to strengthen the bond between students and their significant male relatives. Children honored the men with a variety of poems, artwork, and awards. Following the program, everyone stayed for a picnic lunch, reading, and a performance by a Latin band.

Classroom teachers and students planned and implemented a program to present to their fathers. They chose songs, poems, awards, and performances. The PTO designated committees to address the tasks associated with food, band, date, program invitations, donations, decorations, and others. Subsequent meetings updated progress. The team effort achieved all tasks to organize a successful event.

The Action Team for Partnerships worked hard to encourage parent participation and to recruit reliable volunteers. The team was very persistent and persuasive, met frequently to review progress, sent frequent reminders, and personally contacted many of the families.

The cost of the activity was reasonable. The food committee requested hot dogs for the school lunch to match the menu for the parents. The team spent about $150.00 for food and $100.00 for the band. The event was funded by donations from local supermarkets and from money obtained from PTO fundraisers.

The Action Team for Partnerships observed that students had lots of fun enjoying the presence of their fathers and male relatives at the school. Fathers and male relatives were very proud to be recognized. Families enjoyed a good time together; and as a result, men became more involved in school activities. Many families attended the event, and comments from attendees were very favorable. A good time was had by all!

Zulma Dietz, Action Team Chair
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PRIDE DAY
McGrath Elementary School
Grand Blanc, Michigan

In the spirit of community, students, staff, and families of McGrath Elementary worked together to beautify the outside of their school in an event entitled "Pride Day." This casual fun activity involved students' families and appealed to many different families. Pride Day brought together the school community to blossom a sense of joint ownership about the school.

One sunny afternoon in April, over 100 staff, students, and families gathered at the school to work hard and then celebrate their success. Lots of advertising contributed to the large turnout. The Action Team for Partnerships advertised Pride Day through the school weekly newsletter, staff meetings, and PTO/Partnership meetings. They also sent flyers home with students on two different occasions. The flyers included a tear-off RSVP that enabled the school to order an adequate amount of food and beverages for participants.

Together, students, staff, and families picked up trash, pulled weeds, and planted flowers and trees from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. Local businesses and school families donated plant materials, dirt, and mulch. Families were encouraged to bring their own gardening tools. The school also purchased additional plant materials, dirt, mulch, a bench, and some stepping stones. About $1500 from the Parent Teacher Organization and lots of sweat equity from the participating school community succeeded in beautifying the school, especially its front entrance.

After working outside, everyone celebrated and socialized in the gymnasium with music, food, and family fun. From 7:00 to 9:00 p.m., a deejay kept everyone dancing, and hot dogs, chips, and other snacks satisfied hungry appetites. Pride Day encouraged students to take pride in their efforts to beautify the school. The fun relaxed day bloomed a sense of community among students, staff, and families.

Amy Nagy, Principal
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PSD FASHION SHOW

Pennsylvania School for the Deaf
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania School for the Deaf students commute daily from their homes throughout the city and in some surrounding counties. It is a challenge to involve all families due to their varied needs, interests, and distances from the school. The Partnership Action Team of Community Home and School (PATCH&S) wanted to provide all students and their families with a positive face-to-face school interaction. PATCH&S also wanted to reinforce poise and self-confidence and enhance self-esteem in all students. The resulting activity to meet these goals was a student and family Fashion Show.

Now in its third year, the PSD Fashion Show is an important family event. Implementing the activity involves the following steps:

- Sign up interested students and obtain written parental permission for each student. The parents agree to two things: send in one outfit of the child and parent's own choosing, plus agree to attend the show and/or pick up their child and transport her or him home the night of the show. Parents are encouraged not to buy a new outfit for the show. It is hoped that models will wear a favorite ensemble from their current wardrobes.
- Form the committee of staff and interested parent and community volunteers that will rehearse the students two or three times the last fifteen minutes of their lunch period.
- Send home flyers announcing the show and set up the gym with assistance from the maintenance department.
- Prepare help for the day of the show, for the final rehearsal, and for show night details. Using information from the Parent Interest / Talent survey helps recruit family volunteers.
- Rehearse for the last time right after school. The students then enjoy organized play and a pizza dinner. While the parents eat, the students change into their clothing. Students' family members that have signed up in advance to model can rehearse at home. They also have the option to join the final rehearsal just before the show.

The names of the models are printed in the Fashion Show Program in the order of their appearance on stage. Everyone receives a copy of the program, and students have their picture taken as they strut to the end of the runway. After students descend from the stage, they return to their families in the audience. After the show, parents go to the locker room to pick up their children's clothing.

The PSD Fashion Show strengthens student, family, school, and community partnerships. Parents love the event. Many family members join their deaf children on stage with tears in their eyes. Parents enjoy talking with other parents—something that does not happen very often because of the distances between homes and the school. The community business owner, who caters the dinner before the show, asked to take sign language classes after his enjoyable experience serving students and families. Students love the Fashion Show so much that they eagerly remind staff of their promised participation in the next show, often the day right after the last show. One committee member said, "I missed the show while helping the student models, however the kids' eyes told me they were obviously having a good time." One student model commented, "Last year I was shy and embarrassed, but this year I was confident."

Brenda Wilford, Partnership Action Team of Community, Home, and School Co-Chair
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TYPE 4

Learning at Home

Involve families with their children in learning activities at home, including homework and other curriculum-related activities and decisions.

A READING PARTNERSHIP
Baltimore City Detention Center School #370
Baltimore, Maryland

In March 2002, a reading partnership began at the Baltimore City Detention Center School that sparked literacy-related discussions between students and family members. Judge Wanda Heard had recommended the book, *And Still We Rise*, as part of the probation conditions she gave juveniles. She donated several copies of the book to the school and challenged the students to read it. In addition to incorporating the book into the school curriculum, the Action Team for Partnerships started a reading partnership activity in response to a parent's recount of her conversations with her child about the book.

Parents and students were encouraged to read the book concurrently and discuss the book during their telephone conversations or regular detention center visits. During the Parent, Teacher, Community Support Group Meeting, parents learned about the book by listening to excerpts presented by the teachers, and gathered strategies to discuss the book with their child. Parents also received their personal copy of the book at the meeting.

This first reading partnership activity has seemed to motivate students to read and has re-connected some students with their families, school, and community. The Baltimore City Detention Center is excited about next year's prospects to expand the reading partnership program into an ongoing book club for students and families.

Arthur Harris, Community Liaison Facilitator
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BEDTIME STORIES AND BIRTHDAY PARTY FOR DR. SUESS
Monterey Elementary School
Grove City, Ohio

The Action Team for Partnerships at Monterey Elementary throws a birthday party for Dr. Seuss to bring together families and the community during Read Across America Week. The birthday party encourages daily reading at home, models reading aloud for parents, and gives every child a new book. Monterey Elementary makes reading fun and interesting for a diverse group of people.

Each year the school invites celebrity readers (teachers, community business people, elected officials, and others) to the birthday party to read bedtime stories. Children come in pajamas, dressed as a favorite Seuss character, or in their street clothes. The evening schedules two twenty-five-minute sessions so that everyone can listen to more than one bedtime story. With their families, children choose to listen to two stories. Each reader has his/her own classroom. Some read a big book, some read with a character puppet or stuffed animal to accompany the story, and some dress as a character from the book. Other readers also plan short extension activities such as a writing piece, an art activity, a demonstration, or a snack that relates to the story. A Spanish reader is available for bilingual children.

Following the two reading sessions, all participants gather in the multi-purpose room for birthday cake, cookies, and punch. When families enter the multi-purpose room, they write each family member's name on slips of paper for a drawing. While everyone enjoys the bedtime snack, Action Team members draw names from the baskets. The selected children choose a brand new book to take home. Approximately ten adults receive door prizes purchased by the team or donated by a local business. Examples of adult door prizes are Barnes and Noble gift certificates, movie passes, and books. The event lasts about one and a half hours.

The first year, about 150 children and adults attended the birthday party. This past year, Monterey passed out over 250 children's books and attendance was over 300 people. The event costs about $500, and the PTA funds 100% of the. Community readers return year after year. Families and their children love hearing stories and receiving new books to take home. Bedtime Stories and Birthday Party for Dr. Seuss is a wonderful activity to support increased reading achievement.

Beverly R. Babbert, Staff Development and Curriculm Specialist
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BREAKFAST AND A BOOK
43 Academy
Buffalo, New York

On March 2, 2002, the school hosted a parent breakfast called "Breakfast and a Book" to kick off the Parents As Reading Partners Program (PARP) and to celebrate Dr. Seuss's birthday. The program supported the school-wide goals of increased reading achievement and increased parent involvement. Over 75 parents and 115 children participated.

At the breakfast, parents learned about Project Flight, a three-year literacy project sponsored by Buffalo State College. The project donated over $2000 worth of books to the school to create a lending library for parents. The goal of Project Flight is to help the school become a resource to parents who want to improve their own literacy skills as well as their children's skills. Evaluators monitored book usage and reviewed pre- and post-test reading scores of children who participated in using the lending library. During Breakfast and a Book, parents signed books out to read with their children for the PARP Program.

The PARP program, a PTA-sponsored program throughout New York, was offered to third- through eighth-grade students. Over sixty-five children participated in the month-long program that required a parent to actively participate with their child in reading at home for fifteen minutes a day, five days a week, for one month. Parents were invited to a PTA meeting the following month where they received recognition for their participation with their children. The PTA provided thank-you gifts to the parents, as well as reading medals for the student participants.

Action Team members, the Parent Education Coordinator, PTA members, and school aides jointly organized the breakfast. School administrators and a police officer served as readers for the Dr. Seuss celebration. The cafeteria manager provided a full breakfast for the parents and students. The PTA decorated the cafeteria and provided all of the reading incentives for the PARP program. The Title I Reading Teacher and the Title I Aide, (both members of the Action Team) established the lending library for the Project Flight materials, and maintained records of usage. They also compiled the documentation required at the year's end.

The costs for the breakfast event were minimal. The PTA spent about $50.00 on the parent and student incentives for the PARP Program and about $20.00 for refreshments served at the PTA meeting. The cafeteria manager provided free student breakfasts, and the PTA paid $175 for the parent breakfasts. A local business donated breakfast pastries.

The success of the PARP Program and Breakfast and a Book was measured by the number of participants and the informal comments that were made throughout the program. Parents and community members felt welcome in the school, and seen as valued partners in their children's education. Students realized the importance that the school places on reading, at both their level and at the adult level. They saw adults as role models who enjoyed reading. Hopefully, this focus on reading will result in increased reading achievement.

Other schools might want to conduct the PARP Program and Breakfast and a Book because they involve the PTA, parents at home and at school, and independent reading.

Lorraine Linden, Action Team Member
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EQUITY BOOK CLUB
Nathan Hale Elementary School
Meriden, Connecticut

The diversity of a school population provides a rich, cultural learning environment. It also can present challenges to narrow the gap between the highest and lowest achieving students. The Equity Book Club at Nathan Hale Elementary School was designed to bring together teachers, parents, and students to enjoy dinner, read quality literature that raises the issue of equity, and engage in literature circles to talk about the literature and how it might be connected to their lives. The purpose was to build on the Hale's diverse school community to challenge beliefs, increase understanding, and begin to make changes that improve teaching and learning for all students.

Three separate Equity Book Club events this year gave families of students in the same grades opportunities to participate in grade-appropriate literature dialogues. At each event, up to twenty families (no more than 100 people total) were randomly grouped with facilitators. Before dinner, the families enjoyed cheese and crackers while listening to their facilitator read aloud a book based on the selected diversity theme. During dinner, families were grouped with others who read the same book and were encouraged to engage in a discussion about their book. A designated book discussion facilitator sat at each table with a copy of the book and a book discussion helpful hints sheet. After dinner, families were regrouped to share their thoughts about the books read, issues raised, and the discussion held during dinner. The Book Club events usually began at 6:00 and ended by 8:00 p.m.

One of the evenings in the Equity Book Club series centered around the theme "Multi-cultural Cinderella." Participants read stories about Cinderella from different countries and compared the characteristics that made each culture special and unique. The Cinderella tales reflected the traditions of Mexico, African nations, Korea, the Caribbean, and other locations. Each participating family received a hardcover copy of a Cinderella book.

Each Equity Book Club dinner encouraged participants to attend as a whole family, including little ones and high school students. Families brought a potluck main course dish to feed ten people, while the school provided hors d'oeuvres, drinks, and desserts. Members of the Action Team for Partnerships and school faculty also attended with their families and helped facilitate the event.

The events were free of charge to participants. Grant money and community business donations supported each event. About $100 was spent on plates, napkins, utensils, drinks, cheese, and crackers. Another $400 covered the purchase of books for each participating family.

Overall, participants appreciated the relaxed atmosphere to converse with others about a book. According to one participant, "The book was excellent and getting to know the other families was great. It was a most enjoyable and stress-free evening." Another expressed, "Our family mostly enjoyed the comfortable atmosphere and the time to sit and have conversation, brought back memories and brought out some feelings." One participant summed up the evening, "Everyone loved it!"

Because the Equity Book Club was designed as a parent-teacher-student activity, students could see their teachers and parents learning together. The message to students was very powerful: students, teachers, and parents reading together and talking together about literature and equity communicated the value of reading, promoted personal empowerment, and generated mutual respect.

Susan La Chapelle, Event Coordinator
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FAMILIES WHO WRITE & READ SUCCEED NIGHT
Park Avenue School
Danbury, Connecticut

Everybody has a story to tell. That is the basic premise behind Park Avenue School's Families Who Write & Read Succeed Night held each year in early fall. The Reading and Writing Action Teams, which integrate family involvement with academic goals for students, designed the educational and fun evening focused on improving reading and writing levels for all Park Avenue students. The event emphasizes the importance of reading with children both at home and in school.

At the Families Who Write & Read Succeed Night, the Action Team Co-Chairs present a family-oriented project to the families and students. Each family receives 5-6 blank pages that are three-hole punched, art supplies such as crayons and markers, and a theme to write about. Themes have included helping hands, my family, love, and poetry. For the Helping Hands theme, the pages had a story starter printed on the bottom such as, "I help my family when I ___." The families all work together choosing a title, writing and illustrating a story, and publishing the book by tying it all together with ribbon. Spanish and Portuguese language translators assist families as needed. The children love to see parents draw with crayons. Families enjoy reading their family-made books. The finished books are wonderful keepsakes from this enjoyable evening.

The Reading and Writing Action Teams have used several strategies to annually increase family attendance at the Families Who Write and Read Succeed Night. Prior to the event, the school sends home flyers announcing the evening with a tear-off response card for families to reply. The Reading Team and Writing Team also publicize the event in the school newsletter, *Pathways to Partnerships*, which is also translated into Spanish and Portuguese.

The teams collaborate with the community to bolster resources available at the event for students and families. The Reading Team collects new and used book donations to distribute at the event. Each child leaves the evening with a goodie bag filled with a new book, a bookmark, and a pencil. The team also sets up tables full of free used books for anyone attending. Last year, the Reading Team invited a famous author, Thalia Marakis, to Park Avenue to share the day and evening with students.

The Families Who Write and Read Succeed Night celebrates and shares the joy of reading and writing in a relaxed and caring atmosphere. As one Reading Team member remarked, "We continue to create a positive reinforcement for the love of reading."

Nancy Miller, Action Team Coordinator
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FAMILY FUN MATH: THE 100TH DAY OF SCHOOL
Cottonwood Elementary School
Cincinnati, Ohio

A parent of a fourth grader proposed a creative idea for a family fun math activity to the Action Team for Partnerships. She saw the need for parents and the school to partner in support of children's education, but recognized that (1) many parents did not understand the components of the state's fourth grade math proficiency test; (2) in many cases, parents did not know how to interact with their children around important math concepts; and (3) students needed to see the fun in learning, especially in math. The Action Team for Partnerships agreed that a family fun math night would be a wonderful opportunity to develop school, family, and community partnerships in support of the school's goal of improved student performance on the state fourth grade math proficiency test.

In consultation with teachers, this same parent, a.k.a. the "Professor Mathman," created a series of math activities and lessons based on each strand of the fourth grade math proficiency test. The activities centered around the theme of the 100th day of school which falls a little over one month before the proficiency test is administered. The activities were designed as contests and games with student/parent teams working together to solve a problem, construct a model, or build a puzzle. As students worked, parents received background information about the concept and follow-up suggestions of other ways to encourage student practice and understanding. During the evening, students competed against other parent/child teams, as a class against another class, against the clock, or just to solve an activity for personal satisfaction. The pace was quick, the activities were lively, and the prizes and small rewards were plentiful. Professor Mathman, master of ceremonies for the evening, appeared in wig and full costume and revved up the children about math. When the evening ended, children and parents alike asked to do it again sometime soon.

Parents led the organization and implementation of this event with assistance from the Action Team for Partnerships and school staff. The Action Team arranged for volunteers to duplicate materials, prepare information packets, gather math supplies and materials, and handle registration and publicity for the event. Fourth grade teachers, as well as the principal, counselor, school psychologist, gifted teacher, and several other staff members were on hand at the event to interact with students and their parents and facilitate activities. In situations when a parent could not attend the event, a staff person adopted the student for the evening and helped with the various projects.

The event became a special project for the fifth grade gifted classes at the school. These students participated in some of the plans and preparations and served as special helpers during the evening. They passed out information packets, helped measure and monitor results, checked answers, and distributed prizes.

Local businesses donated supplies for the activities as well as math materials and motivational rewards. In addition, a mini-grant of $100 supported the event, and the district covered costs of duplicating, paper supplies, and publicity.

One of the challenges was finding time in the school schedule. This was a busy time in the year, and the Action Team for Partnerships questioned whether it could fit another activity into the school calendar. The event was scheduled after second quarter exams and report cards, but before the final busy days of preparation before Open House, conferences, and proficiency tests. The bottom line was that when an activity is good for kids, there is always a way to get it done.

Students learned a lot about math concepts that related to the fourth grade proficiency test in math, but even more importantly, they learned that math practice could be fun and exciting. Students and parents benefited from the opportunity to work together in an effective, positive learning situation. The school benefited by welcoming parents who take the lead to organize such a successful educational event.

The Action Team has already started making plans for the third annual Family Fun Math Night scheduled for next year's 100th day of school. Upcoming third graders are anxiously anticipating their chance to take part in the program when they are in fourth grade.

Laura D. Barrett, Cottonwood Family Involvement Program Co-Chair
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FAMILY INVOLVEMENT BINGO GAMES
Fairmount Park Elementary School
Canton, Ohio

Everyone loves the thrill of shouting, "BINGO!!!" Fairmount Park Elementary School took this favorite pastime and adapted it to promote frequent interaction between students and parents focused on literacy. Family Involvement Bingo supported the school improvement goal of reading by sharing family-friendly specific literacy activities with parents. The Bingo games proved to be a fun way to reinforce to students the importance and pleasures of reading in everyday life.

Two Title I staff members and the principal devised the educational Bingo sheets to look like regular Bingo cards with academic activities in the boxes instead of numbers. The Bingo sheets were distributed to all K-5 students on the first school day of each month. Students were to achieve a regular Bingo (horizontal, vertical, or diagonal) by completing at least five activities with a family partner by the end of the month. Each activity was expected to take thirty to forty-five minutes to complete. Examples of activities included:

- Read and follow directions of a recipe to make a special family dessert.
- Write a thank-you note to a community helper (fireman, librarian, police officer, or other helper).
- Create bookmarks about reading.
- Write a list of products you see at a grocery store using the letters A-Z.
- Draw a map and write directions to show how to get from your house to the school.

There were a total of twenty-five activities on each Bingo sheet. Teachers emphasized to students and parents that the activities were to be completed with a family partner, not by the student alone. Students who achieved Bingo for the month received a paperback book as a reward.

Students and families played the Bingo games for four months starting in January. Throughout this time, students expressed that they enjoyed working with their parents; some students brought back worksheets explaining how they did the activities with their

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family partner. Students learned from the hands-on experiences and shared quality time with their parents on educational activities at home. Parents emphasized that the Bingo games gave them a chance to do some fun learning activities with their children. Parents appreciated the school's guidance on specific ways they could read and write with their children at home.

The school plans to continue the monthly Family Involvement Bingo. They are considering strategies to gather input from parents, students, and others on new literacy activities to include in the boxes. Fairmount Park Elementary School surely has a winner with its Family Involvement Bingo!

Bev Ciricosta, Principal
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FAMILY NIGHTS
Lincoln Elementary School
Bucyrus, Ohio

The Action Team for Partnerships at Lincoln Elementary planned four Family Nights during the school year to develop a welcoming climate of school-family-community partnerships. The events included Family Patriotic Night, 100th Day of School Night, Right to Read Night, and Family Math Night. The Action Team wanted all children and families to have fun together while learning.

At each Family Night, families rotated through stations staffed by teachers in the gym. At the Family Patriotic Night, a veteran from the community conducted a flag respect program. Participants listened to and identified patriotic songs, and they read and wrote patriotic poetry. Everyone made handprint banners to send to New York City. Other activities included: making red, white, and blue jewelry pins, reading patriotic books, and snacking on cookies, red punch, blue punch, and white milk. On the hour, a musician played "Taps."

The 100th Day of School Night included the following activities: reading the principal 100 books from the library; looking through catalogs and choosing $100 worth of merchandise; listing 100 different words; making a 100 chart using pennies; creating eye glasses in the shape of the number 100; and writing about the first 100 days of school. The 100th person to enter the gym for the Family Night received a prize.

The Right to Read Family Night had a theme of bears. Participants read books about bears and made corduroy bears. Students read with their parents. They also visited stations to draw. A final activity was a book reading contest.

On average one hundred parents and students attended each Family Night. The Action Team publicized the events in the local newspaper and on an access TV channel. Team members also invited newspaper reporters to the events. Refreshments and supplies were funded by the parent organization and the principal's fund. Scheduling was a challenge, and the team learned to select dates that did not conflict with athletic activities and church nights. Family Night participants completed surveys at the end of the evening or took them home to return later.

Students had fun learning with their parents and liked doing activities together. Parents enjoyed their time with the students and staff. After attending Family Nights, parents were more willing to volunteer. Teachers and students interacted with each other in a setting different from the classroom. Family Nights helped families and students learn and play together.

Kathy Wells, Principal
(419) 562-9081

FAMILY READING/MATH RESOURCE CENTER

Clara E. Westropp Fundamental Elementary School

Cleveland, Ohio

The Action Team for Partnerships at Clara E. Westropp created a family resource center to improve student literacy and math skills and help parents feel more comfortable working with their children at home.

The Action Team found space in the school library for the resource center. Teachers wrote proposals for funds to purchase reading and math materials. Resources included educational games, books, workbooks, flashcards, maps, and many other items, and a parent library of reading materials just for parents. Team members took an inventory of all resources and cataloged them. They organized the materials by grade level and activity for easy use. Instructions were developed for each activity, and a parent request form was designed. The team continually assessed the school's needs for reading and math support materials and the materials that were utilized with the most success. The Action Team conducted two workshops every month to train parents on the use of the materials. If parents could not attend the workshops, they received the information sent home with the next month's calendar.

The Family Liaison sent all families a letter announcing the opening of the Family Reading/Math Resource Center and describing its hours and borrowing procedures. Parents returned a tear-off permission slip for their children to use the resource center. Students visited the resource center during school hours to borrow materials of interest to them for use at home with family members. Parents completed request forms listing topics or skills for which they would like resources, and students could bring these items home. Parents and students were responsible for all materials borrowed and agreed to return them on Friday. Failure to return materials in good shape or on time resulted in a loss of borrowing privileges.

The cost of the Family Reading/Math Resource Center was approximately $5,000. Grants received by teachers covered the cost. Parent and community volunteers offered their time to help run the resource center.

Students' reading and math scores on the state proficiency tests have increased. Students have demonstrated greater ownership of their learning. Parents have become more interested in their children's academic success. The number of school volunteers has increased. Parents who could not come to the school building had access to important resources that they could use at home to help their children improve reading and math skills. These results indicate that the Family Reading/Math Resource Center performed an important function for Westropp students and families.

Cristina Miranda, Family Liaison
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FAMILY SCIENCE NIGHT
Highlands Elementary School
Naperville, Illinois

Highlands Elementary wanted to bring parents and students together to understand how science concepts exist in everyday life. This area was selected because Highlands' 2001 ISAT test results indicated physical science was the weakest subtest. The goal for Family Science Night was to show science concepts in a fun and exciting manner.

The family science night linked to the following school goals:

- Students become increasingly literate in language arts, mathematics, sciences and the fine arts,
- Students share responsibility for their education with educators, parents, and the community,
- Students are intrinsically motivated as they experience joy in learning, and
- Students think creatively, integrate information, and work to cooperatively solve real life problems.

A small committee comprised of two parents and a faculty advisor investigated several different science-themed alternatives ranging from corporate and museum sponsored programs to self-developed hands-on experiments. After a thorough evaluation, the committee determined that a science presentation best fit the needs of the school for the 2001-2002 school year.

The team selected scientist Steve Belliveau from Getting Excited About Science who was recommended by the Du Page County Board of Education. The School/Family/Community Partnership (SFCP) team also chose him because he offers follow-up events, including hands-on stations for future family science nights.

Three weeks prior to Family Science Night, the main hallway bulletin board was decorated in the science night theme to generate interest in the event. The bulletin board was in 3-D with wild colors and featured a mad scientist, an airplane flying overhead with a science night banner, a large light bulb, a tornado, and several beakers with overflowing metallic bubbles. At the same time, a backpack flyer with an RSVP request was sent home with all children, and a reminder notice was sent home the week before the event. The RSVP request provided an attendance estimate for room set-up.

Over 300 people attended the Family Science Night on December 5, 2001, from 7:00PM to 8:00PM. A stage was set up in Highlands' gym with the scientist's equipment. Mr. Belliveau performed the experiments on stage, but moved to the audience when explaining scientific principles. Mr. Belliveau performed six experiments and explained the principles for each one. Parents and students participated in the experiments.

The presenter charged $340, which included all supplies for the experiments. The school's art supplies were utilized to create the bulletin board, and the backpack flyers were copied at the school, minimizing the cost of the project. The SFCP Team funded the evening from their annual budget, which is donated by the Highlands' Home and School Association. The cost per attendee was approximately $1.13, making this night a very good value.

This was one of the most attended School/Family/Community Partnerships activities at Highlands. The 300 people, including over 100 students, attending the night represented all grade levels. Everyone enjoyed the presentation. Most importantly, it showed students and families how fun science can be and how intertwined science is with everyday life.

The SFCP Team plans a follow-up event using Steve Belliveau and his hands-on science experiments for the 2002-2003 school year. One enhancement will be a take-home flyer highlighting the key scientific concepts to be distributed at the end of the event.

Julie Stern, Action Team Member
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FAMILY WORKS
Kent Island Elementary School
Stevensville, Maryland

Kent Island Elementary School received a grant from Family Works on the Eastern Shore, the federally funded Parent Information Resource Center, to develop school, family, and community partnership practices in its pre-k to grade two school. This year the school held two fun and informative learning nights to introduce parents to its new math curriculum and to share some reading and media techniques that they could use to help their children at home.

In October, about eighty parents and their children attended the Family Math Night. The two-hour evening began with an overview of the new math curriculum including a video presentation followed by math games that could be played at home. Parents, students, and teachers divided into three groups by grade level to participate in grade-appropriate math games from the new curriculum. In February, families, students, and teachers came together again to celebrate "A Star Spangled Banner Night for Reading." This engaging family reading night incorporated four sessions: media techniques; reading strategies; the reading referral process; and reading games and homework tips. The patriotic theme warmed everyone's hearts on this cold winter night.

Both the math night and the reading night gave school staff an opportunity to explain programs to parents before confusion and misunderstanding occurred that might interfere with student progress. It also enabled parents to ask questions and share information about how the reading and math programs could benefit their children.

Linda L. Jefferson, Teacher Specialist, and Robert B. Jackson, Principal
(410) 643-2392

FOREIGN LANGUAGES: YOUR PASSPORT TO THE WORLD

Bennett Park Montessori Center #32

Buffalo, New York

Italian Night Parent Workshops shared the benefits of foreign languages with the Bennett Park Montessori community. The six workshops targeted two goals:

- Inform parents about the benefits of learning a second language, such as enhanced memory, increased SAT scores, improved higher order thinking skills, and increased understanding of other cultures.
- Enable parents to see how Italian is taught at school.

Current job opportunities for individuals that become foreign language speakers also were reviewed.

Each age group was invited for an evening workshop at school. The parents observed their children participate in a typical Italian lesson. The children were then treated to Italian refreshments (pizza, grape juice, and chocolate spread on crackers) and "Muzzi" the education language cartoon. With the children entertained, the parents received a lesson in Italian. Parents learned memory tricks to show the many ways the brain learns and links information. Parents were also taught ways to help their children increase memory, improve comprehension, and value diversity. Information sheets included memory hints and Italian terms. About forty parents attended each of the six workshops. A federal grant covered the workshop expenses.

At the workshops, the students showed their parents how well they understood and enjoyed their foreign language studies. Other schools wishing to encourage foreign language skills or provide parents with information about the foreign language study benefits and improvements to cognitive skills might enjoy a similar workshop.

Kim Lennert Walek, Action Team Chair
(716) 851-3790

GET CAUGHT READING

Dr. Lydia T. Wright School of Excellence #89
Buffalo, New York

Get Caught Reading was instituted as part of the annual "Parents and Children Reading Together" program. Students returned a reading contract signed by the parent and child at the beginning of the reading program, agreeing to read at least twenty minutes per night for five out of seven nights. Students who returned a signed contract complete with home phone number were eligible to "Get Caught Reading."

During the designated week for Get Caught Reading, students needed to read or be read to between 7:00 and 7:30 pm Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday nights. The principal, classroom teachers, special area teachers, aides, and the school secretary volunteered to call homes to "catch students reading." Classroom teachers did not call the homes of their own students to limit parent-teacher conferences on the telephone.

Children who were "caught reading" received recognition in several ways. Their names were mentioned during morning announcements, their pictures and names were displayed in the school hallway, and they received small prizes. The Home School Association provided the money for film and prizes.

The Get Caught Reading program was a huge success. The children loved being called at home by a staff member. Families engaged in quality reading time with their children; many parents commented on the value of the program to the staff members who called. On each consecutive night of the program, more and more children were "caught reading!" Children who returned contracts and were not "caught reading" wanted another chance. The next time this program is implemented, these children will be called a second night. This partnership practice was an inexpensive way to promote quality reading between children and their parents and positive phone calls home.

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LATINO LITERACY PROGRAM
Gates Early Education Center
Los Angeles, California

Draw a flower with petals for each of your children. In the center, write the child's name. In the petals, write positive descriptive words about the child. Do the same for each of your children. Now, share the flowers with your children and let them hear positive words about themselves.

These are the instructions from one of the activities in which families participated during the Latino Literacy Program at Gates Early Education Center in Los Angeles. The program aimed to enhance parents' literacy involvement with their children ages two-and-a-half to five by providing a cultural-based educational program for Spanish and English speaking parents.

About eight to ten parents, mostly mothers but some fathers, attended each two-hour session of the ten-week bilingual program that is led by a school-based bilingual teacher. A total of more than forty parents have attended the program since its inception. The Latino Family Literacy Project© provided the curriculum which is designed to be a fun integration of critical reflection and dialogue with reading, writing, and art projects. At the Gates Early Education Center, families followed the "Cuentos Familiares/ Family Stories" curriculum in which they discussed parenting concerns, education, family goals, and family traditions. Each weekly session centered on a different bilingual children's book including: *Carlos and the Squash Plant*, *A Gift from Papa Diego*, *The Spirit of Tio Fernando*, *The Woman Who Outshone the Sun*, and *Uncle Nacho's Hat*. Participants made a family tree, wrote a letter to a family member, composed a creative description of their children, and wrote a letter to their children.

Throughout the ten-week session, parents created family albums as a final project. The facilitators distributed disposable cameras to the parents at the second session. Parents were instructed to take pictures of family events for the next two to three weeks. Then facilitators developed the pictures, and parents made family albums by using construction paper, binders, stickers, templates, stamps, markers, and other materials. At the last day celebration, parents had the opportunity to present their albums to the class as a way to share their family events and cultures.

In addition to supporting literacy interactions between parents and children, the Latino Literacy Program increased family-school connections. Parents had an opportunity to share their family experiences with other parents and with school staff; and they strengthened their understanding of parents' roles in helping their young children learn at home. School staff noted an increase in parents' use of the parent/home lending library and an increase in information sharing during parent-teacher conferences. Parents in the Latino Literacy Program at Gateway Early Education Center involved their children in the program's fun learning activities while increasing their own confidence in providing learning activities for their children at home.

Elizabeth Martinez, Teacher
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MAD HATTER MEASUREMENT

Frederick Law Olmstead #64, #67, and #56

Buffalo, New York

Mad Hatter Measurement supported the school improvement goal to increase student math achievement by giving parents and children a fun opportunity to work with rulers and measurement. Parents and children enhanced math skills while creating hats and scarves.

Mad Hatter Measurement resulted from a project that made hats and scarves to give to shelters during the holiday season. The children had such fun making the hats and scarves that they wished they could keep them. The Program Committee of Olmstead Home School Association decided to have a free evening event where parents and children could work together. Measurement was added to the sewing activity to reach one of the action plan goals. The Program Committee asked teachers for math measurement activities and purchased felt (on sale at 50% off), needles, straight pins, and thread. The school provided rulers and pencils. All families received a flyer about the event that requested an R.S.V.P. to make sure there were enough materials. Measurement booklets were made up, along with copies of the scarf and hat pattern. Prior to the event, some parents took the felt home to cut in advance.

Prior to guests arriving, the program committee set up tables with rulers, pencils, needles, straight pins, and a pattern. Sets of hats and scarves lined the edge of the stage so that children could pick the material they wanted. Facilitators gave general directions at the beginning of the event, and volunteer teachers and parents walked around offering further directions and helping check initial measurements. Children measured the length of their scarves as well as the length of the fringe they needed to cut. They also measured an edge on their hats that needed to be turned up and sewed.

At the event, families also received packets of measurement activities for grades pre-k to eight to work on together at home. The packets showed the many simple ways measurement is used in daily life.

Approximately 175-200 parents and students attended Mad Hatter Measurement at a cost of about $300. About twenty eighth graders and some of their parents came to sew hats and scarves to give away as part of a service project. Staff members served refreshments provided by the Program Committee and donated by the community. The Program Committee also paid for door prizes that were awarded to the parents. A huge response very close to the day of program required purchasing more felt. Although it was no longer on sale, the fabric store gave the rest of the needed felt for 50% off.

Students benefited from this practice because they used measurement activities in a fun way, and got to make something useful to take home. The event fostered a feeling of community and friendliness. People attended who normally do not attend school functions. Parents got the chance to do something fun with their children. Mad Hatter Measurement was held on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday, so the Program Committee passed out some blue paper clouds and markers and asked parents to write a dream they have for their children. The clouds were hung in the school for all to see.

Parents and students gave all positive comments. When 8:00 p.m. rolled around, nobody made a move to leave! The most positive evaluation was the many students who wore their hats and scarves to school the next day. They were all proud of their handiwork!

Kathy Rua, Action Team Member
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MAKE IT AND TAKE IT WORKSHOPS
Mason Elementary School
Canton, Ohio

Mason Elementary designed a Make It and Take It workshop for students and family members to make literacy-focused learning games that they could play at home that would support the school improvement goal of raising reading levels for K-3 students.

Teachers selected learning games from resources provided by the district's Parent Resource Center. The district facilitator from the resource center also helped organize the workshop. At the workshop, family members and students enjoyed cutting and coloring pieces to play the learning games. On the back of one of their games, parents wrote a small note, like a dedication, to their child saying how they felt about making and playing the game together. The district Parent Resource Center laminated the games and returned them to school to be sent home. Weeks later, families continued to report that their children liked to play the games they made together more than their store-bought games.

Support from the district and donations from businesses of food and incentives helped make the evening enjoyable. Every family in attendance received an incentive to take home. The school also provided transportation for families who needed it. Next year's Make It and Take It workshop will also include math activities.

Paulette Frech, Community Worker
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Promising Partnership Practices | Type 4

MATH CLASSES
Byrd Middle School
Sun Valley, California

Math scores at Byrd Middle School were not improving as well as reading scores. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) recruited a Byrd Middle School math teacher to volunteer his time to teach parents about what their children were learning in math and to explain what each grade level is required to master before moving on to the next level. He demonstrated how teachers taught students new concepts and skills, particularly in algebra and problem solving.

Implementation of the math classes first involved finding out what parents wanted to know about their teens' math curriculum using a survey and word of mouth. After the data was collected, the math classes took shape. Then, the ATP posted dates for the classes on the calendar, and sent flyers announcing the math classes to parents. Parent volunteers issued personal invitations by telephone and sent reminder flyers closer to the dates of the classes. The ATP arranged for space in the building plus the availability of an administrator so the school could remain open from 6-7:30pm. The ATP also found old math books and made a four- to five-page booklet so that parents could complete math problems similar to the ones their sons and daughters complete. A local store donated refreshments to the classes to reduce costs.

The math classes helped parents become more familiar with the math curriculum and better prepared to help with homework. Hopefully, this additional knowledge and assistance will contribute to better math achievement for Byrd Middle School students.

Kathy McDonald, Parent Center Director
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OPEN COURT PARENT WORKSHOPS

Vinedale Elementary School
Sun Valley, California

Camellia Avenue Elementary School
North Hollywood, California

To facilitate parents' understanding of the newly instituted Open Court reading program, Action Teams at two schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District each organized similar workshop series to foster home-school support for students to improve their progress in language arts.

Through discussions with parents, the Action Team for Partnerships at Vinedale identified the need for its Open Court workshop training. The Action Team worked with its reading coach, Parents As Learning Partners facilitator, the Healthy Start Family Advocate, and administrators to craft the subsequent workshop agenda, resources, and materials. All families of students in grades kindergarten through fifth and special education were encouraged to participate in the workshop. To reach out to all families, the team conducted some of the workshop sessions at a local agency site in the community that was closer to students' homes. They also offered the workshop in both the morning and evening to accommodate families' schedules.

At Camellia Avenue Elementary School, the Action Team for Partnerships worked with its two Open Court Coaches to design its workshop series focused on basic reading skills. Camellia Avenue held its workshops on three different days, two days for primary grade parents and one day for upper grade parents. In preparation for the workshops, parents helped assemble packages containing Open Court sound spelling cards, high frequency sight words for each grade, a sample story, and an overview of the workshop in Spanish for the participants to take home. To accommodate Spanish-speaking parents, the coordinator and the parent community representative translated at the workshops.

The Open Court Workshop series at Vinedale and at Camellia Avenue brought parents and school staff together in partnership to make this new language arts program a successful learning experience for students at both schools. Parents were pleased to receive information on ways to help their children at home with the Open Court reading program and with general reading strategies. The schools have since observed that more students are coming to school better prepared to make progress in language arts.

Both schools have plans to expand their workshops next year, focusing on new ways to address transportation and scheduling challenges, and possibly adding math workshops to the series.

Jean Graham, Program Coordinator, Vinedale Elementary
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Hortencia Hernandez and Cynthia Alonzo, Action Team Chairs, Camellia Avenue Elementary
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PARENT BENCHMARK NIGHTS
Lincoln Elementary School
Wichita, Kansas

Lincoln Elementary School staff supported the decision that increasing family and community involvement would help improve students' achievement. They planned eight Parent Benchmark Nights for second-grade families to enhance parent knowledge of the benchmark assessments and increase the number of students who pass the assessments.

A teacher wrote a grant to the Downtown Optimist Club to fund the project. The club is a member of Optimist, International, which is a service club similar to the Rotary Club or the Lions Club. They raise money for youth-related activities. The Downtown Optimist Club partnered with Lincoln Elementary because of its urban setting, and donated about $600 to cover the costs of materials, food, and incentives for the Benchmark Nights.

Each Benchmark Night targeted specific standards of reading, math, or writing. Parents and children received portfolios that included a reading test, a writing prompt and samples of students' writing, and a math test with problem solving. The portfolios helped parents learn what their children are asked to do on the assessments. Participants engaged in educational activities during the evening. Parents also received handouts on the activities presented such as reading a story and identifying the characters, setting, problem, and solution. Students participated in Benchmark Nights by helping their parents make and use the activities and explaining to their parents what they were learning in class.

Approximately sixteen to twenty families attended each of the eight Benchmark Nights—about 50% of second-grade families. Student assessment scores improved from the previous year after Parent Benchmark nights were conducted. Almost all students (91%) passed the reading, writing, and math assessments. In addition, all parents gained information about the district assessments and what their children were learning at school.

Patty Steele, Parent Involvement Worker
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PROFICIENCY BREAKFAST
Collinwood Computech Middle/High School
Cleveland, Ohio

One of Collinwood Computech Middle/High School's goals is to raise Ohio Proficiency Test scores. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) hosted a Proficiency Breakfast where parents, students, teachers, and community members received test preparation materials, played learning games, and built camaraderie to assist students pass the exam.

The Breakfast served up four themes: Pancakes for Math, Grits for Science, Bacon for Social Studies, and Eggs for Language Arts. Participants correctly answered questions in order to receive each food item. At the end of the game, anyone who did not correctly answer the questions received breakfast.

The ATP organized the majority of activities for the Proficiency Breakfast. The team gathered resources for parents and community members such as practice proficiency tests on CD, proficiency games in math and science, practice proficiency test booklets, and referrals to citywide services that offer free assistance in all areas of the test. In addition, parents volunteered to assist with preparing and serving breakfast and General Electric, the school's business partner, donated light bulbs to all participants.

One hundred and thirty-six parents, students, teachers, community members, and Action Team members attended the event. Nineteen eighth-grade students passed the exam in comparison to the previous year's eight. As a result, these students met the requirement and can now focus on other important milestones in their education.

The Proficiency Breakfast raised parent and community awareness about how to help students pass Ohio's proficiency tests. This event also reinforced for parents, students, teachers, and community members that a group effort yields important results for students.

Dorothy Wynn and Caroline Peak
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TYPE 5

Decision Making

Include families as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy through PTA/PTO, school councils, committees, and other parent organizations.

FAMILY AND TEACHERS FOR CHILDREN: A COUNCIL STRUCTURE

West Carrollton Early Childhood Center
West Carrollton, Ohio

West Carrollton Early Childhood Center established the organization Family and Teachers for Children (FTC) to utilize the unique talents and skills of family members, community members and local businesses, and staff members to provide the best possible learning environment for its students. The organization also maintained ongoing communication between school, home, and community.

The FTC is comprised of five councils and one overarching advisory council. The five councils are Parenting, Communication, Volunteer, Learning at Home, and Community Collaboration (decision-making is inherent in the entire council structure). Members of each council generally meet monthly to organize the council's specific partnership practices. The Advisory Council, consisting of a representative from each council, as well as the school principal, meets in the evening of the second Monday of each month. The Advisory Council monitors progress and fosters communication between the five specific councils. All councils include family members, community members, and staff members.

Family members of newly enrolled students are personally invited to become active members of the FTC during Family Orientation at the beginning of the school year. Parents and other caregivers have an opportunity to speak with representatives from each council and sign up for the one in which they are most interested.

The individual councils that comprise the FTC have developed and implemented activities and programs to increase the effectiveness of the school. The Volunteer Council recruits parent volunteers for school day activities. This council also holds four volunteer brunches on Saturdays during the school year. They have worked on playground maintenance and beautification of school grounds. One of the greatest accomplishments of this council was the construction of lofts in each of the preschool classrooms and in the kindergarten activity rooms. The lofts served as literacy centers as well as dramatic play areas.

The Parenting Council provides resources to meet the challenges of parenting. The Family Resource Coordinators facilitate this council. The Community Collaboration Council interacts with area businesses and organizations, and has been responsible for securing materials and equipment that are enjoyed by students and teachers as part of classroom wish lists. In return, the council encourages staff and families to support these local community businesses.

The Communications Council publishes the school newsletter, *Family Focus*, which includes news from each council as well as news from classrooms and individual staff members. This council also publishes the *Meet the Staff* handbook, which profiles each staff member so that families can become familiar with staff members as individuals who have families, interests, and concerns much like their own.

Lastly, the Learning at Home Council organizes fun academic evening programs for children and their families, including Family Reading Night, Family Fun with Math Night, and the Science Fair. These programs have been positively received and participation has increased each year. The council also organizes and distributes materials and information to support parents in participating in their children's learning.

The council structure of the FTC organizes leadership and implementation of a comprehensive program of partnerships that addresses each of the six types of family and community involvement. More people have an opportunity to make decisions regarding school, family, and community partnership practices. The structure also allows many people to apply their strengths and interests to particular types of involvement, rather than trying to have one small Action Team manage everything. Because of its shared leadership, the council structure has enabled the FTC to withstand changes in building leadership and council member turnover.

The FTC has been a powerful opportunity to welcome family members to the school system starting at the early childhood education level, and help them understand the importance of their involvement throughout their children's school years.

Kimberly Hall-Alt
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LUNCH FOR PARENT TEAM MEMBERS
Highlands Elementary School
Naperville, Illinois

In an effort to build a strong foundation for the School/Family/Community Partnership (SFCP) Team, the two parent team co-chairs and the principal hosted a lunch for all parent SFCP team members the week after school began and two weeks prior to the first full SFCP team meeting.

The objectives of the Parent Lunch were:

- Introduce all of the parents to each other and make them feel comfortable talking to one another, the parent team co-chairs, and the principal. Providing a relaxed environment and lunch helped everyone feel at ease.
- Explain the goals and procedures for the team. The parent team co-chairs gave each SFCP team parent a copy of the SFCP Handbook prior to the meeting and then reviewed the information during the lunch so that the parents could take notes and ask questions.
- Provide an opportunity for everyone to make suggestions or present new ideas for the year. The team developed the annual plan the prior spring, but there was still an opportunity to make changes and include the new parents' input.

The Parent Lunch was very successful. All SFCP team parents attended. Old and new parents actively participated during the two-hour meeting and personally talked with the principal. The orientation for the parents made the first full SFCP team meeting with staff an upbeat, relaxed meeting without "first meeting jitters."

Jane Wernette, Action Team Chair
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MAINTAINING STUDENT MEMBERSHIP ON ACTION TEAM
Glenmary School
Peace River, Alberta, Canada

School, family, and community partnership programs are designed to support student success, and at Glenmary School students play a key role in that design. Glenmary School's Action Team for Partnerships successfully achieves its program goals in part because of its excellent commitment to student involvement on the team.

Glenmary's Action Team presently has six student members, five of whom have been on the team for two years, which will be part of the team for 2002-2003. The full Action Team for Partnerships, adults included, meets at 4:30 p.m. The students receive a reminder and the agenda for the meeting two days before the meeting is to take place. Students often stay at school and do homework until it is time for the meeting to begin. This start time eliminates the issue of transportation. Also, meetings begin and end on time, so students are aware of the time commitment expected of them. Snacks are provided at each meeting. It is important to feed these students, especially after school. They really look forward to this part of the meeting!

Consideration is given to extra-curricular activities. Students who play on sports teams are encouraged to attend practices and games even if they conflict with Action Team meetings. Students are kept up-to-date on what is happening at Action Team meetings and attend regularly when possible.

The Action Team makes sure that students understand they are a vital part of the team. The students take part in all discussions, and all members of the team respect their opinions. Students are encouraged to offer input on issues that are under discussion and are active participants, especially in small group work. They are often given jobs to do during the meetings such as recording ideas, reporting for their group, and other tasks.

The students see their ideas and suggestions incorporated into the team's strategies. For example, when the Action Team decided to host a Grade 7 Open House before school last year, the planning for the day was turned over to the students on the Action Team. They decided what should be included in the afternoon, designed the invitations, and acted as hosts and hostesses for the event. This year they are taking more of a leadership role by organizing another group of students to serve as hosts and hostesses.

Students are encouraged to get involved in the strategies and to involve other students as well. The Action Team hosted a Community Appreciation Breakfast. The students volunteered to help with different tasks that needed to be done and were encouraged to invite students who were not part of the team to get involved. Students from the Action Team helped make decorations, faxed invitations, cooked, and helped serve breakfast. They were successful in including other students in many of these tasks, and a total of 30 students helped with the event.

Students receive certificates of recognition for their contributions to the Action Team. These certificates become part of their portfolios and are a record of their leadership and willingness to volunteer. Their portfolios are used to write resumes and apply for scholarships.

A student wrote at the last Action Team meeting this year, "I have really enjoyed this year. AISI has been kind of weird because I'm working with adults to make decisions about what is going to happen. Taking part in the team has been a lot of fun. It feels good to show up at things and know I've been chosen to participate, even if it is signing people in at 7:15 in the morning. I really think the Grade 7 Open House and the Volunteer Breakfast were really good. Next year I hope to get more of my friends involved."

Lois Laurin, AISI Coordinator
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TEAMWORK SUPPORTS RIGHT STUFF KIDS
Park Avenue School
Danbury, Connecticut

Park Avenue School targeted improving student behavior and reducing suspensions as one of the school improvement goals on which to focus school, family, and community partnerships. The school established the Right Stuff Behavior Team to design and implement a character education program to support and celebrate the school's kindergarten through fifth grade students' positive behaviors. This team was one of five teams at the school that integrated school improvement plans and school, family, and community partnership practices.[1]

The Behavior Team shared leadership and responsibilities between its nine representative members: three classroom teachers, one parent, one resource teacher, one nurse, one psychologist, one physical education teacher, and one speech specialist. The Behavior Team designed the behavior-focused Action Plan for Partnerships, delegated responsibilities for implementing the planned activities, and set a schedule of monthly Behavior Team meetings. The team took primary responsibility for the Right Stuff Kids Project.

The Right Stuff Kids Project focused on four character traits: friendship, patience, honesty, and determination. At the beginning of each quarter, fourth and fifth grade students or teachers introduced the quarter's designated character trait by performing skits at the whole school assembly. Each morning on the intercom, the students heard an example of the character trait for that particular quarter. At the end of the quarter, each teacher chose up to five students who exemplified the character trait. These students were rewarded as Right Stuff Kids with buttons and an ice cream party at the next whole school assembly. For each Right Stuff Kid, the teacher mailed a postcard and personal congratulatory note to the student's family.

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[1] The other four teams were the Math Team, Reading Team, Writing Team, and Fun Connections Team.

The Behavior Team collaboratively implemented the Right Stuff Kids Project. One team member worked with the art teacher to make the buttons using students' artwork. The classroom teachers on the team organized skits for their students to perform at the whole school assemblies. Two other team members announced the Right Stuff students' names at the assemblies. Another team member bought the ice cream treats and served the treats after the awards assemblies. Another team member took pictures and posted the pictures at the school. Two team members selected character education quotations to be announced each morning. They also included Park Avenue students in creating their own example of the character trait that students read over the intercom. Finally, the Behavior Team provided Park Avenue teachers with the Right Stuff postcards to send home to students' families.

Beyond collaborating as a team, the Right Stuff Behavior Team also communicated about the program with the school community. The Behavior Team informed the School Council about four times per year of the team's activities and progress. For families, they wrote summaries of the program and recognized Right Stuff students in the school newsletter, *Pathways to Partnerships*, which was also translated into Spanish and Portuguese. Recently, the program expanded into the community with "Lunch with the Principal" where three Right Stuff Kids are randomly selected each quarter to have lunch with the principal. A local restaurant, Chuck's Steakhouse, donated lunch for two adults and three children four times a year.

As a result of strong teamwork, the Right Stuff Kids Project at Park Avenue has decreased the number of suspensions and increased the positive, respectful school climate. The Right Stuff Kids feel good about themselves, thus motivating the other students. The Right Stuff Behavior Team demonstrates the potential of a goal-oriented action team approach.

Nancy Miller, Action Team Coordinator
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TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE
Kennedy Junior High School
Lisle, Illinois

A parent's concern sparked the inception of the Technology Committee at Kennedy Junior High. The father felt his son was missing out on necessary technology exposure that would better prepare students for the future. The principal encouraged interested parents to form a committee to explore additional technology avenues for the school community. The initial parent chaired the committee, consisting of parents, administrators, and a Parent Involvement School, Family and Community chairperson. The mission of the Technology Committee was to provide students with more opportunities for hands-on technology applications, to increase teachers' use of technology during classroom instruction, to educate parents and the community about the usefulness of the Internet, and to foster business partnerships with a focus on technology.

The committee planned and implemented two Technology Nights in addition to continually pursuing grant funding and equipment acquisition. Over forty parents attended each Technology Night.

The committee reinforced the importance of technology to its students, faculty, and parents. Many fathers felt quite comfortable stepping forward to help the committee. The committee met before school, enabling many fathers to participate. Kennedy Junior High received funds, grants, and donations from the technology industry to help cover costs. Donations of computers, and video equipment enhanced Kennedy's technology resources.

The Technology Committee involved more parents and increased their awareness of the technology applications being used at school. Parents gained knowledge about the Internet's benefits for children's learning. Several students received recognition for their technology contributions to the school. In addition, it provided business partnerships to positively impact the learning experiences of students in the community.

Maureen Dvorak, Action Team Co-Chair
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TYPE 6

Collaborating with the Community

Coordinate resources and services for families, students, and the school with businesses, agencies, and other groups, and provide services to the community.

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ACTION—A COMING TOGETHER IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD
Allen School
Canton, Ohio

Two years ago, a neighborhood volunteer approached Allen School's community worker about establishing a summer enrichment program for neighborhood youth in pre-k through seventh grade. A successful community partnership formed between Allen School and St. Anthony Parish.

The team developed a parent survey to assess the community's needs. Based on the data, the team created ACTION—A Coming Together In Our Neighborhood. The program offered summer afternoon activities taught by Allen School staff that included dance, drama, music (band), vocals (choir), and the American Red Cross Camp Safe Crossing Program. Students attending the morning program at the Southeast Community Center could receive lunch and participate in ACTION's afternoon activities, free of charge.

Each spring, the team creates a brochure listing the activity choices and their dates, and distributes it to Allen School students. Parents register their children for dance, drama, band, or choir. Children share what they have learned in performances scheduled for the Allen Back to School Picnic and the Neighborhood Block Party at St. Anthony's Church. Attendance at the afternoon activities and end-of-summer community events is near 100%. Parents and neighbors volunteer to help with the activities once they see their value and how much the children enjoy them.

The greatest challenges are finding funds, space, and a fiscal agent. Fortunately, the Stark County Foundation funded the program after the team wrote a grant application, the Allen School provided a safe environment for the children to learn, and Saint Anthony's agreed to be the fiscal agent. Based on ACTION's first year success, the Stark Foundation has funded the project for a second summer. This partnership between school and community results in enriching summer activities for elementary school students.

Velva C. Taylor-Grace, School Community Worker
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AFTER SCHOOL TUTORING FOR NINTH-GRADE STUDENTS
James Ford Rhodes High School
Cleveland, Ohio

James Ford Rhodes High School wanted to increase the number of ninth-grade students passing the Ohio proficiency test. The school recruited community and teacher volunteers to tutor students after school to assist in improving students' math skills.

The school sent flyers to education departments of local colleges inviting students to an open house in October. There, college students learned about the tutoring program and agreed to tutor students as part of their community service. Retired educators, grandparents, and parent alumni also offered their tutoring services.

The tutoring sessions ran three times per week from 2:30-4:30 pm, September until May. Each participating ninth grader had his/her own tutor. The tutors used proficiency materials and workbooks focused on fractions, division, and word problems.

Attendance varied, particularly dropping off after spring break. The program communicated to parents to encourage their children to attend the tutoring. Students also had a difficult time remaining focused on the importance of the tutoring helping them pass all areas of the ninth-grade proficiency test. Committed guidance counselors, teachers, college students, and interested parents took struggling students under their wings.

One hundred out of 500 ninth graders received tutoring. Student test scores on the proficiency test did increase from October to March. In particular, reading scores increased 7%, writing scores increased from 72% to 90%, and math scores rose 18%.

Increasing test scores on the ninth grade proficiency test will continue to be a goal. Thanks to the volunteer efforts of college students, retired teachers, grandparents, and parent alumni, Rhodes High School is on the road to success.

Madolyn Sherrell and Celeste Vealey, Action Team Members
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BUDDY READING PROGRAM
Mill Street Elementary School
Naperville, Illinois

The Buddy Reading Program between North Central College and Mill Street Elementary School is the partnership of approximately sixty pre-service education students and sixty fourth and fifth graders exchanging dialogue on a one-to-one basis about a specific novel. Communication is via a college-based WEBboard that allows students to exchange ideas and make connections using the latest computer technology. The program's goals for students are twofold: fourth and fifth grade students will (1) participate in a learning dialogue about grade appropriate literature and (2) utilize communication aspects of technology. The program also complements the school improvement objective to create opportunities for students to interact with the community as a way to see reading as a meaningful lifelong activity.

Twice a week for three weeks, the fourth and fifth graders engaged in written discussions via the WEBboard with their college reading buddy. Mill Street students enhanced their reading comprehension skills by making predictions and connections and holding authentic meaningful discussions about the novels with their college reading buddies. The North Central College students incorporated reading strategies from their methods classes and from Mill Street teachers in their web-based discussions and face-to-face meetings with students. Together in the Buddy Reading Program, fourth graders and their college buddies read *Yang the Youngest*, *Junebug*, and *Jackie Robinson*, while fifth graders and their college buddies read *Pigs Might Fly*, *Harry's Mad*, and *Martin's Mice*. All novels were part of the district curriculum.

A subcommittee of the Literacy Goal Team at Mill Street Elementary worked with the Department of Education at North Central College to create the Buddy Reading Program. Parents participated in the initial team discussions and worked with the subcommittee as needed. Planning began with a meeting in the fall between fourth and fifth grade teachers, the reading specialist, the technology integration specialist, the reading instructors from North Central College, and the principal.

The technology component proved to be the primary challenge. The Mill Street technology department assisted in arranging Internet access so that the fourth and fifth graders could access the North Central College WEBboard.

The Buddy Reading Program incurred minimal costs—about $75 for refreshments and $75 for transporting students to North Central College for face-to-face visits. Technology was provided through the school and the college. The college students participated as part of their pre-service teaching methodologies courses. Now that the school's Internet access and capacity has been improved, it will be easier to implement the communication via WEBboard next year.

As a result of the Buddy Reading Program, Mill Street students enhanced their technology and reading comprehension skills while engaging in meaningful dialogue with positive community role models around novels.

Ruth Cross, Principal, and Jane Boor, Literacy Goal Team Co-Chair
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MINI RELAY/FIELD DAY TO FIGHT CANCER
Centennial Elementary School
Wapakoneta, Ohio

Students and staff raised funds and awareness for the Auglaize County Cancer Society walking together in the Mini-Relay/Field Day held in May during school hours. This collaboration educated students about the effects of cancer and prevention methods; built stronger connections between students, parents, the school staff, and members of the community; and promoted a good cause. The Centennial Elementary staff had participated previously in the Auglaize County American Cancer Society's Relay for Life as a team. This year the team wanted to include Centennial students, so they initiated the Mini-Relay/Field Day to Fight Cancer.

A group of staff members met in January to plan the Mini-Relay/Field Day activity to include all students (K, 1st, 2nd) and staff members at Centennial Elementary. In April, an opening ceremony motivated all students and staff members. The school guidance counselor spoke to the audience about cancer and its effects, and representatives from the Relay for Life committee shared their thoughts with the students and staff members. Two weeks before the Mini-Relay/Field Day activity took place, all students and staff members obtained an envelope to collect donations for the American Cancer Society. A donations thermometer in the school's main hallway grew to reach the goal of $2,500.

On the day of the Mini-Relay/Field Day, all students and staff members and many parents walked thirty minutes around a ¼ mile course set up behind the school. For each lap, each walker collected a clothespin; at the end of the 30 minutes, each class counted their clothespins to record the total number of laps walked. Five hundred seventy walkers walked 3,486 laps. Second grade pen pals joined the Mini Relay/Field Day from Coldwater Elementary School. With the help of all those listed above and community sponsors, organizations, businesses, and the Centennial Parent Teacher organization, Centennial Elementary raised $7,901.84 for the Auglaize County Unit of the American Cancer Society. Special guests State Representative Derrick Seaver and Co-Chairs of the Relay for Life Committee Laura Kelley and Theresa Fisher participated in the closing ceremony. To celebrate achieving their goal, students and staff members taped the principal to the wall.

At the official Auglaize County Relay for Life (a 21-hour walk for cancer), held on May 10th and 11th, all students were invited to walk the first lap together as a school team of students, their families, and staff members from Centennial Elementary.

A challenge for the Mini-Relay/Field Day was the uncertainty of the weather. To overcome this challenge, an indoor course was established as a back up plan. Fortunately, it turned out to be a nice day. The minimal costs of this activity were supported by the Learn and Serve Ohio grant program.

Afterwards, every student and staff member received a letter showing the measured results of the activity. Relay participants wrote thank-you notes to community organizations that sponsored them, the local newspaper featured the story as well. An evaluation sheet, sent home with every student and staff member, enabled everyone to share their thoughts and comments about this community activity.

The students benefited from this activity by learning about cancer and the American Cancer Society. They gained a sense of community awareness and a sense of pride knowing they helped find a cure for cancer. This activity was a great way to collaborate with and for the community.

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OZZIE'S READING CLUB
Highlands Elementary School
Naperville, Illinois

Ozzie's Reading Club, a reading incentive program sponsored by the Kane County Cougars minor league baseball team, encouraged students to increase their reading at home. During the eight-week reading program, approximately 400 students met their identified reading goals, and their families were involved in the process throughout.

On January 14th, Ozzie the Cougar, the baseball team's mascot, came to Highlands School to kick off Ozzie's Reading Club. Students attentively listened to stories read by baseball players, the town mayor, parents, and the principal. They got autographs from the players, and cheered themselves on as they prepared to boost their reading.

Throughout the eight-week program, students read to round the bases (first, second, third, and home plate). Each grade level had a goal in minutes, pages, or books to read during each two-week increment (two weeks equaled one base). The reading was to be done outside of school with the family or independently. Parents served as coaches, fans, and umpires for students' reading. At each two-week increment, a parent had to sign a verification form for the student to reach the base. A poster outside of each classroom displayed students' advancement from base to base, and a bulletin board in the school's hallway posted the names of all participating students.

Students who completed the program (made a homerun) received a ticket order form that was good for one free ticket to one of the Ozzie's Reading Club game nights. The form also had spaces where families could order additional tickets for a nominal fee. The tickets included a voucher for a free t-shirt, hot dog, and soda for each participant. The school was very lenient in making the ticket order forms available after the due date to any student who needed to catch up.

The culminating event was the baseball game. All Highlands' families sat in the same general area. Many students attended with both parents and even their grandparents to watch the game and enjoy the activities. Everyone arrived forty-five minutes before the start of the game, and the children marched in a parade led by Ozzie the Cougar. Each participating school was announced and the children were commended for their hard work in completing the program. They also received t-shirts that they could have autographed by the mascot and team players. After the game, children went onto the field to run the bases just like the players do during the game.

Ozzie's Reading Club energized team spirit in the school community around reading. Participating for the first time in a school-wide reading incentive program, Highlands School hit a grand slam.

Jessica Jozwiak, Action Team Co-Chair
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PAWS FOR READING
Carstens Elementary School
Detroit, Michigan

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) at Carstens Elementary School accepted support from the Detroit Tigers Major League Baseball team to demonstrate the importance of reading and to reward individual student's achievement.

The Detroit Tigers sent a letter informing Carstens Elementary about the availability of the Tiger mascot, Paws, for assemblies. The ATP scheduled two assemblies—one for the lower grades and one for the upper grades. The Detroit Tigers provided a script that included the introduction of Paws and a poem called "Casey at Bat." A fourth-grade male teacher introduced Paws and read the poem. Paws does not speak so he acted out parts of the poem. Carstens school band played music to accompany Paws. After the poem was read, students answered questions about what they had just heard. Paws distributed Detroit Tigers stuffed animals as prizes for correct answers. Students and staff provided very positive feedback about the assemblies.

The Detroit Tigers gave the school Tigers pencils, baseball cards, and pins. The school awarded these souvenirs to each class as additional prizes based on listening well during the reading of the poem and the assembly. Carstens Elementary used some of the souvenirs as raffle prizes for Reading Month; for every book that students read, they were entered into the monthly raffle. The Detroit Tigers also sponsored an attendance contest through which several students attended a baseball game as a reward. Paws was in the area where the students were sitting, which provided nice continuity from the assembly.

Paws will be invited back next year. The cost of $125 for the assemblies was well worth it. The Detroit Tigers helped support the importance of reading in a motivating way.

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SCHOOL BEAUTIFICATION PROJECT
Madison Junior High School
Naperville, Illinois

Madison Junior High School will celebrate its 25th anniversary next year. Since its opening, the school has never fully completed the landscaping around the front entrance, and, consequently, flooding has been a problem. Skate boarders and roller bladers have also found the area enticing, resulting in damage to the surrounding walls and concrete.

One Action Team for Partnerships member mentioned these concerns to her spouse who then created digitally enhanced photographs of the school's front entrance. The pictures showed what could be achieved by painting the concrete walls, adding the name of the school, and making new raised gardens. The team decided to use the pictures as a guide for beautifying the front entrance of the school in time for the 25th anniversary.

Many people helped bring this plan to fruition. A team of parents and staff raised funds for the project by selling frozen pizzas from a local store. The school district grounds department built the raised gardens. A community partner painted the walls and added the name of the school. The school environmental club planted over 500 flower bulbs to bloom in the spring. Meanwhile, a parent who owns a garden landscape company donated her time to draw landscape designs. Another parent negotiated with a local nursery, which has formal partnerships with some schools in the district, to supply the plants at a discount and to plant the larger bushes. The school custodians picked up the smaller plants from the nursery. A team of volunteers planted the shrubs and perennial flowers, working over several days to account for different schedules.

Thanks to this team effort, the school's entrance is now more clearly marked and is an inviting area for visitors. The drainage problems are solved. Skate boarders and roller bladers seem to respect the new look of the school, and vandalism has not been a problem. The school's front entrance is ready for the anniversary celebrations.

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SHOEBOXES FOR AFRICA
Westminster Community School #68
Buffalo, New York

Shoeboxes for Africa involved students, faculty, and parents with other community organizations in a project to benefit school children around the world. The Westminster Community School Family teamed up with Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and The Buffalo Chapters of The LINKS, Inc. to collect and distribute much needed school supplies for students in African countries. The seventh- and eighth-grade student council spearheaded the shoebox drive. Westminster students used their vivid imaginations to decorate the boxes, using brightly colored contact paper, dried flowers, sponge paints, and an assortment of stickers and ribbons. Many of the students made the activity a family event by completing the project at home.

Faculty, staff, and parents donated enough pencils, crayons, rulers, notebooks, lined paper, scissors, and many other items to stuff the shoeboxes to the top. The students expressed pride knowing that they were helping other children who were not as fortunate as they. Westminster students continue to learn that there is much joy in giving.

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THE QUILTING PROJECT
Galena Middle School
Galena, Maryland

For the past eight years, sixth-grade students at Galena Middle School have participated in an annual quilting project with families, community members, and teachers to provide ill children with beautiful quilts. The students have learned measuring, geometric concepts, sewing skills, and positive social skills while contributing to their community. A Galena Middle School teacher created the project after her own daughter became ill and had received many kindnesses during a long hospital stay. Giving handmade quilts has been a wonderful way to let parents and hospitalized children know that others care about them.

The Quilting Project supports the school improvement goals of academic achievement and family and community involvement. Students use basic and higher order thinking skills to solve problems and communicate results. The project involves staff and students in community service, enriching the educational process.

The Quilting Project usually begins in November with the collection of materials, and then students work on their quilts from December through February. All sixth graders participate in the project. Fathers as well as mothers, aunts, and grandmothers assist the students. Depending on the number of students participating and teachers' available time, students construct an average of twenty to thirty quilts per year. Each quilt takes anywhere from ten to twenty-five hours to complete. Thus far, Galena Middle School has donated 147 quilts to area hospitals.

Students follow the steps listed below to create their quilts.

Step One:	Students assemble fabric packs which were previously created (backing fabric with top fabrics cut into 4-5 inch squares).
Step Two:	Students select three or four group members and a fabric pack, and construct grid-patterns to be sewn.
Step Three:	Students learn to thread needles, make knots, draw seam allowances, and sew squares and rows together. Parents and family members

volunteer to teach sewing classes to aid in reading grids, sewing and pressing seams, running sewing machines, and other skills.

Step Four: Students put the top and backing together and secure it with knots.
Step Five: The teacher takes all completed quilts to the hospitals.

School faculty and staff strongly support this project. They donate items and support students while sewing by visiting classrooms to lend a helping hand. Grant money from the Maryland Student Service Alliance (MSSA) greatly helps to offset expenses.

The greatest challenge faced by the quilting project is the gathering of necessary materials. Quality fabrics are expensive, but easier for the students to work with. Parents donate materials, grant money purchases fabrics, and teachers donate the use of sewing machines and other sewing supplies. Depending on the supplies donated, the cash outlay runs between $200 and $600 per year. However, the smiles, tears, hugs, and cuddles received from parents and patients make the quilts priceless!

In the Quilting Project students learn and work with family members, teachers, and peers to do for others, rather than themselves. Everyone sees the positive results of the students' work in hospitals where the quilts are displayd until they are given to patients. Some quilts also are shown in the local 4-H Fair held in the county each year.

The Quilting Project is evaluated by feedback received from nurses, thank-you notes written by parents of children who received quilts, and the teachers' personal visits to the hospitals. The hospitals ask that the students not visit because of the risk of germs. As an alternative, pictures capture the deliveries and students read the thank-you notes and other comments kept in a class scrapbook.

To enhance the Quilting Project, the teacher has created a web page to help students learn more about quilting, its history, and its connections with math. Visit www.kent.k12.md.us/kcps/projects/Quilt/main.htm for the sixth grade website and www.cte.jhu.edu/techacademy/web/2000/heal/artists.htm for the seventh grade website.

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DISTRICT-LEVEL LEADERSHIP

Districts in the National Network of Partnership Schools conduct district-wide leadership activities, and help elementary, middle, and high schools to develop their programs of school, family, and community partnerships.

CHANGING LEADERSHIP

Los Angeles Unified School District, Local District B

North Hollywood, California

Two years ago the Los Angeles Unified School District reorganized, and Local District B went from a cluster of twenty-six schools to a district of over eighty schools. The superintendent of the newly formed local district had never worked with partnership programs. Eager to sustain the partnership programs that had been functioning for several years, the district Partnership Programs Team took steps to educate the new superintendent about the program and to garner her support.

The first step was to share an amazing amount of information with the new superintendent so that she understood the big picture. Information then continued to be shared on a weekly basis, breaking the big picture into smaller components. The Partnership Programs Team, consisting of nine members, still maintains weekly meetings with the superintendent to review progress, discuss issues, and plan for future implementation.

The second facet of the transition was the advocacy for partnership programs from credible stakeholders. The Director of Families In Schools, a well-respected outside organization that implements programs for parents in the community, emphasized to the new superintendent her high regard for the partnership programs. Administrators from local school sites who had experienced success with Action Teams for Partnerships and action plans also provided testimonials based on their positive experiences. Further advocacy for Local District B's partnership programs came from the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS).

In October 2001, the new superintendent accompanied the Director of Partnership Programs to the NNPS Fall Leadership Conference. The conference made a tangible difference in the superintendent's understanding of school, family, and community partnership programs. Subsequently, the superintendent began to publicly support the implementation of the six types of involvement. She made her expectations regarding implementation of the six types of involvement known at every level with principals, teachers, and parents.

As a result of the superintendent's support, the Partnership Programs Team has now participated in a two-day retreat to develop a three-year outline and a one-year action plan for the district for next year. The team has full support to scale up their efforts district-wide. The superintendent intends to return to the National Network of Partnership Schools' conference again this fall, and has plans to fund four members of the Partnership Programs Team to accompany her.

Local District B, Los Angeles Unified School District, demonstrated that a change in leadership can enhance partnership programs when the right steps are implemented.

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COLLABORATION WITH NATIVE EDUCATION PROJECT

Holy Family Catholic Regional Division No. 37

Peace River, Alberta, Canada

The Holy Family Catholic Regional Division No. 37 has a Native Education Project in seven out of eight schools that seeks to effectively involve Aboriginal parents in the education of their children. Because this is also an objective of the Action Teams for Partnerships, the Division recognized that these two projects should collaborate to fulfill this common goal.

Both the Native Education Project workers and the Action Team for Partnerships members bring unique perspectives, knowledge, and skills to this endeavor. The Action Team leaders recognize that the Native Education workers are an invaluable resource for understanding Aboriginal cultural issues. The Native Education workers recognize that Action Team members have the expertise of the framework of six types of involvement and strategies for partnership program development. A district-level opportunity for dialogue between these two groups would increase their effectiveness to support Native parents in their involvement with schools.

The first district-level meeting for the Action Team leaders and Native Education workers convened to address challenges to partnerships between schools and Aboriginal parents and to generate strategies to meet these challenges. A follow-up meeting monitored the extent to which this information transferred to implementation in the schools. Native Education workers and Action Team leaders collaborated on a goal and strategies that could be incorporated into both project plans.

After the initial meeting, not all schools used the information to begin the dialogue at their respective locations. Consequently, there was no consistency in the development of the strategies for building partnerships between schools and Aboriginal parents. The Division perceived that one reason for this inconsistency might be attributed to the nature of the Native Education workers' positions. These individuals have many responsibilities within their schools, including monitoring attendance of Native students, and therefore have less time for other initiatives. Additionally, the strategies were not incorporated into the initial

Action Plans for Partnerships; hence, they were not necessarily carried out. The intent was good; however, the approach was random.

The follow-up meeting enabled Native Education workers and Action Team members from each school to systematize the approach by developing one goal, as well as strategies that would target parents, students, teachers, and the community. For example, one school planned to deliver presentations to all of its Aboriginal communities about the schools' policies and rules as they relate to the School Act by the end of the 2002-2003 school year. The meeting intended that written goals such as this would establish accountability.

The only cost to these meetings was travel and meals. Money for these expenses was available through a project called "Healthy Minds and Bodies for Student Success," which is funded through a provincial initiative.

Ultimately, these collaborative meetings between Native Education workers and Action Team for Partnerships leaders benefited schools by allotting time to specifically examine the issues and connect the people who are involved in the common goal of supporting Aboriginal parent involvement in the schools. Currently, the Division is evaluating the project's process rather than its impact on student achievement. Success at this stage is defined as effective collaboration between the Native Education workers and the Action Team leaders on this objective. Evidence of this collaboration exists. Some schools have taken the information back to their staff, held discussions regarding strategies for improved partnerships between the school and the Aboriginal families, and have set some strategies for the 2002-2003 school year. This discussion is a step that had been evasive before, and the district acknowledges this action as a successful result of the division-level meetings.

Collaborating to fulfill this common goal will enable greater achievement by the Native Education workers and Action Teams for Partnerships and, most importantly, achievement by students who are supported by schools and families in partnership.

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COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARDS—SPREADING THE WORD

Taunton Public Schools

Taunton, Massachusetts

By utilizing bulletin board space in a large number of prominent city businesses, Taunton Public Schools aimed to communicate to a larger audience on a regular basis, showcase the excitement of learning in its schools, and inform additional people about the Massachusetts Education Reform and its impact on student outcomes. As part of Project B.E.S.T. (Building Educational Success Together), a team comprised of the Superintendent of Schools, the Mayor of Taunton, and the schools' Community Liaisons proposed partnership opportunities to leading businesses in the greater Taunton area. One such opportunity enabled each partnering business to provide bulletin board space in their facility for the respective partnering school. The goal of the Community Bulletin Board project was to spread the word that Taunton Schools and its students were everyone's investment—education is a shared responsibility.

Once a business partner committed to providing bulletin board space, school representatives (usually the principal and a teacher) visited the company, located the bulletin board site, measured the space, and developed an agreeable system and timetable for installing and updating the bulletin board. Businesses were asked to notify their employees via newsletter or e-mail that this would be a new addition to a specific space, to share news of the partnership agreement, and to generate some excitement for this addition. In some instances, the bulletin boards were in company-only space and benefited employees only. However, in a number of instances the business partners were public entities—the local hospital, banks, the local electric company, the local newspaper and a mall department store. In the public spaces, a large number of citizens viewed the bulletin boards.

The greatest challenges, once businesses understood that they had no responsibility beyond providing the space, were to identify school staff members who would assume the responsibility for maintaining the bulletin boards and to establish a feasible schedule of updating the Community Bulletin Boards. The staff challenge was addressed at a faculty meeting when the purpose of the Community Bulletin Board space was clearly outlined, and the idea of rotating the responsibility among several staff members was adopted. It was agreed that the parent of each child whose work would be displayed on the Community Bulletin Boards should grant special permission and that last names of students would be omitted.

The challenge of time stemmed from developing monthly themes and content for the boards. Staff members were exhausted from updating the displays so frequently. In response, all bulletin boards will be changed at least seasonally during the school year with an eye toward a theme that would work well over the summer months. Some schools and their business partners have elected to continue to change the bulletin boards on a six-week rotation. Business partners and school staff members have been satisfied with this new timeline.

This practice cost the district very little money. On one occasion, a company did not have a bulletin board but did agree to designate space. The district purchased the bulletin board for the company. Material and project costs that were related to the students' work to be displayed on the Community Bulletin Boards were part of the operating budget of each participating school. Time costs associated with going to the business to change the Community Bulletin Boards were generally incorporated into salaried employees work responsibilities.

The Community Bulletin Boards disseminate information, showcase educational excellence, create goodwill in the community, and are entertaining for the viewing public. This practice reaches a very large number of people, is easy to implement, provides a worthwhile community service project for students (development of the boards), communicates favorable information about a school system to the general public, provides an opportunity for people to chat about education, and is viewed by the receiving businesses as a colorful interlude amidst their business flyers and other communications. A Community Bulletin Board is a great way to reach the broader public.

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COMMUNITY EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE EXPO

Lowndes County Schools

Valdosta, Georgia

The community of Lowndes County, Georgia, has a lot to offer parents, students, and community members. The Lowndes County Schools Community Educational Resource Expo provided an opportunity to share information about available materials and resources in the community while also promoting school, family, and community partnerships.

Over 800 parents attended the hugely successful Expo held in the community auditorium. Upon entering the auditorium, parents viewed art displays from several Lowndes County schools. Families could register for door prizes as they signed in, and winners for the door-prize drawings were announced at fifteen-minute intervals. After registering for door prizes, parents entered either the stage area to watch children perform or the multipurpose room to peruse vendor displays.

In the multipurpose room, parents and students enjoyed informative displays from seventy-five community resources and toy vendors including Valdosta State University, the county health department, Children's Advocacy Center, the Armed Forces, Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA, Sylvan Learning Center, Kay-Bee Toys, Kmart, and many others. Vendors set up professional-quality backboard displays with photos, flyers, and other materials highlighting their particular service or area of expertise. Most vendors laid brochures and free items in front of their displays for pick up by the parents as they browsed the aisles. Parents gathered information on GED classes, had their blood pressure checked by Valdosta State University nursing students, learned about educational toys, and discovered new community resources to support themselves and their children.

After seeing the displays and student performances, children could have fun outside. A football throw and ring toss, music, balloons, and clowns were located just outside the multipurpose room. Students and families also enjoyed hot dogs and drinks on the lawn.

Part of the Expo's success stemmed from diligent, collaborative preparations. A core group consisting of district leaders, Action Team members, school faculty members, and community partners met on an ongoing basis to implement this practice. There were eleven schools represented from the county school system. Each school chose an area to work on, such as entertainment, food, advertising, carnival games, resource vendors, toy vendors, and door prizes. This event was partially funded by the Lowndes Education Improvement Foundation (LEIF) and partially sponsored by donations from the vendors.

Parents shared positive and constructive feedback on evaluation forms before leaving the Expo. The district leadership team has since used the evaluations to develop the design for the 2002 Expo scheduled for November 19th. Involving more people in the preparations and implementation, and starting the planning earlier were two of the improvement strategies. Overall, parents benefited from the event, commenting: "This was wonderful;" "I didn't know there were so many opportunities available in my community for my child or myself;" "Very informational;" "It was great to see the community pull together like this;" and "The children performing really got the parents out." Lowndes County Schools' parent involvement programs continue to help families and children have successful lives.

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DISTRICT SUPPORT FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

Los Angeles Unified School District, Local District B
North Hollywood, California

School, family, and community partnerships at the middle and high school levels decrease unless schools make concerted efforts to sustain and enhance family and community involvement. Local District B, Los Angeles Unified School District, committed to supporting its secondary schools to develop plans and activities that would enhance their school, family, and community partnership programs.

First, the district Partnership Team conducted a series of meetings for secondary school Action Teams for Partnerships. These meetings initially provided opportunities for participants to share successes and challenges. Over time, the secondary school Action Teams began to focus in on the challenges and envision partnership programs that would fit their needs.

Around that same time, the district assigned one of its district Partnership Team members to specialize in serving secondary schools. Although all of the district team members were capable to assist these schools, the district determined that a specialized facilitator, whose major responsibility was to support secondary schools, would lead the secondary schools to develop partnership programs. Accomplishments of the past eighteen months have demonstrated these strategies to be effective.

District-supported secondary school initiatives began with communication and relationship building. The initial activity, Coffee and Conversation, provided a pot of coffee, a box of donuts, and an opportunity for parents and teachers to engage in informal conversation during teachers' planning periods or before or after school. This activity was simple yet effective.

Next, the district's secondary schools recruited parents who were willing to hold meetings for ten to fifteen people in their homes. They then invited parents and two to six teachers to attend meetings at the volunteer parent homes. At these House Meetings, parents contributed food for dinner, and everyone enjoyed getting to know each other and discussing issues of mutual concern over a shared meal. Parents and teachers came to better understand one another through these meetings.

Now, the district-supported secondary school partnership activities have progressed to focus on student achievement. One project, the Parent Mentor program, invites parents whose children are having difficulty to become a mentor for someone else's child. The district trains each mentor to work with one student. Mentors talk to students about items that appear in their student planner and also spend time doing textbook walks with them. In addition, the parents have learned strategies to ask questions that cannot be answered with a single word. In return for the time that parents spend as mentors, they are guaranteed that their own child will also be assigned a mentor. The district chose to organize the project this way because of the natural urge that young adults have to pull away from their own parents and their desire to become more independent. By mentoring someone else's child, parents are learning the skills that they will one day be able to use with their own child or younger children.

These district-supported programs of school, family, and community partnerships presently operate at varying degrees in six middle and high schools throughout Local District B. Ongoing, structured district facilitation and specialized district leadership have enabled these secondary schools to strengthen and sustain partnership programs. The secondary schools now feel successful enough that they have organized and participated in a conference for secondary schools with two other school districts.

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DISTRICT-WIDE PARENT DINNER
Fresno Unified School District
Fresno, California

Fresno Unified School District and its Parent Engagement Center hosted an end-of-year district-wide Parent Dinner to recognize district individuals who most contributed to parent involvement in the district during the year. The event celebrated the entire district's success in developing school, family, and community partnerships and distinguished the contributions of diverse individuals.

Everyone in the district had the opportunity to nominate someone who consistently supported school, family, and community partnerships. Prior to the event, the Parent Engagement Center distributed flyers and posted an announcement on its website requesting nominations for many categories of recognition at both the elementary and secondary school levels. Anyone in the district could nominate a person in the following categories: principal, vice principal/program manager, teacher, site office personnel, other classified personnel (bus driver, office personnel, custodians, and others), parent facilitator/home-school liaison, community member, student of the year, best newsletter, and parent. Individuals wrote essays of up to two pages in length describing how the nominee had made a difference at school and contributed to a better parent involvement program. The Parent Engagement Advisory Committee selected the winners of each category who then received distinctive plaques at the district-wide Parent Dinner.

On May 1, 2002, Fresno parents, families, school board members, the district superintendent and cabinet members, principals, and school staff all gathered at the Duncan High School auditorium for the district-wide Parent Dinner. More than 1,100 participants enjoyed the multi-ethnic presentations reflecting the district's diverse cultures and the speeches and public recognition for the forty Parental Involvement Award Recipients. Delicious complimentary hot dinners were served, and childcare was provided. A representative from a national publisher attended the event with his mascot Curious George to distribute free books to children. A locally well-known Hmong television reporter served as the event's emcee. The Parent Dinner was literally standing room only and food was short, but everyone was elated and energized.

The district-wide Parent Dinner incorporated all the right ingredients to make it a success for Fresno: convenient meeting time and day based on survey responses; multi-ethnic and multicultural presentations; delicious food; available childcare; multilingual simultaneous interpretation; and, most significantly, public recognitions of individuals' contributions to school, family, and community partnerships.

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FAMILY READING NIGHT
Winneconne Community School District
Winneconne, Wisconsin

The front-page story of the March 6th *Winneconne News* hailed the Family Reading Night as "an enjoyable event for readers of all ages." Winneconne Community School District's Family Resource Center organized the reading night for all families in the school community as a kick-off event for its weeklong Read Across America program. The Family Resource Center wanted to share the importance and fun of reading with students, school staff, families, volunteers, and community members while promoting a stronger school and community relationship.

On February 28th in honor of Dr. Seuss, families gathered at Winneconne Elementary School where they made paper Dr. Seuss hats, cooked Green Eggs & Ham sweet treats (melted white chocolate, pretzel sticks, and green M & M's), and participated in a Dr. Seuss trivia contest to win gift certificates for the next PTA Book Fair. At ten-minute intervals, Featured Readers began to read favorite children's books to everyone seated on beanbags, blankets, quilts, and chairs. Featured Readers included preschool and elementary school teachers, a middle school administrator, parents, business partners, a doctor, a newspaper reporter, and several more community representatives. Families, students, community members, and school staff enjoyed Dr. Seuss' birthday cake, coffee and juice, and green eggs (Jell-O jigglers) throughout the evening. In all, ninety families, or about 450 people, attended the event from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.—a wonderful turnout for a village of about 2,200 people.

The successful family reading night entailed much pre-planning and preparations. A series of six meetings covered discussing with the Teachers' Union their involvement in the event, obtaining information on Read Across America (http://www.nea.org/readacross/), coordinating volunteers and support staff, and disseminating letters to promote the event. District leaders, school faculty and staff, families, and community and business partners collaborated at every stage of event planning. Families with children of all ages were encouraged to participate. Along with an anonymous donation of $300 (of which only

Promising Partnership Practices | District-Level Leadership

$175 was spent), Banta Publishing Company donated books for every child attending the event.

The school sent letters home about a week and a half before the Family Reading Night informing families and children about the evening's activities. The local *Winneconne News* featured the upcoming activity in its February 27th newspaper. On the night of the event, families checked in at the school lobby and received an information folder about family reading and children's top 100 book lists. They then proceeded to the school's cafeteria which displayed posters that classes had made showing people reading, pictures of books, and names of Dr. Seuss books. The Book Swap (bring a book, take a book) was the first activity of the Reading Night. Because the Book Swap was such a success, there is now a Book Swap every Friday during the first recess.

Follow-up surveys completed by participants confirmed that the Family Reading Night was a positive educational experience for families and students. From the surveys, the Family Resource Center collected ideas for future improvements including getting a better PA system for the featured readings, holding the PTA Book Fair concurrently, and using classrooms for craft-making so that listeners could hear the readers better.

The First Annual Family Reading Night brought awareness to the school and community about the Family Resource Center. The event sparked an increase in community volunteers who want to be involved in the next Family Reading Night. In fact, the Family Resource Center is planning four theme-based Family Reading Nights for the 2002-2003 school year, one per grading quarter. The Family Resource Center of Winneconne is working hard to bring together families, schools, students, and the community to support success through education.

Mary Koeck, Family Resource Center Board Member and
Dawn Schafer, Family Resource Center Secretary
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FLAMBEAU COMMUNITY EDUCATION
School District of Flambeau
Tony, Wisconsin

The small school district of Flambeau is located in a rural, economically disadvantaged county in northwest Wisconsin. To enrich the education of its 690 students in pre-k to grade twelve, the Community Education Office initiates, creates, and implements a diverse array of collaborative partnerships at the local, regional, state, national, and international levels.

An Advisory Council of twelve to sixteen board members governs Community Education. Most of these members are community members, and some are teachers, school board members, and students. The Community Education Advisory Council initiates numerous school improvement initiatives, partnerships, community events, and community partnerships. For example, Flambeau established a partnership with the Institute of Entrepreneurship to help teachers develop school-run businesses. The Community Education Office also developed a mini-grant writing program for teachers to incorporate project-based, work-based, and place-based learning into their classrooms and organized community health and exercise activities. The Community Education Director oversees the workings of community education programs.

One community education program for high school students was an internship program with the Smithsonian Institute for its annual Folk Life Festival held on the National Mall in Washington, DC. This pilot program gave high school students hands-on, work-based, meaningful experiences sponsored by a renowned museum. The Smithsonian Institute sent two museum curators to Flambeau School for a weeklong training session with twelve high school students and a teacher. The Smithsonian and the school arranged transportation, housing, work-site mentors, and job placements for each student for the two-week Folk Life Festival. Contracts were made between the Institute and the students. Student experiences were integrated into the Work-Based Learning Curriculum through the School-To-Work program within the district. Employed by the Smithsonian Institute, the students served as stage crew assistants, retail assistant managers, security, volunteers and administration assistants, design assistants, and sales and fundraising assistants. These students will remember for the rest of their lives their work experience with the Smithsonian Institute and their experience at the Folk Life Festival as an enriching part of their high school curriculum.

The Flambeau Community Education Office also has taken on the role of change agent, reaching out to the world at large and helping bring in ideas, funds, and change through a grass-roots effort within the community. The Community Education team collaborates to handle the tasks of developing, writing, and evaluating the various programs that have been implemented within the district. The team employs a word-of-mouth and personal interaction approach to running the office so as to enhance their genuine partnerships with school, family, and community members.

All students within the district benefit from the numerous programs that fall under the umbrella of community education. From preschool to high school, programs have brought the world into classrooms and have sent the students out into the larger world beyond their small school district. Students' education has been greatly enriched. Family participation levels have risen through aggressive marketing of evening programs for parents, adult education classes, and senior citizen property tax relief programs. The district has reported a significant increase in facility usage both during the day and into the evening as a result of the Community Education Program.

With sincerest efforts, Flambeau is striving to create the best Community Education Program in the nation to affirm for students that leadership comes from actively participating in their school and community.

Dave Johnson, Community Education Director
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KNOWLEDGE BANK

Naperville Community Unit School District 203

Naperville, Illinois

When knowledge is shared, everyone wins, especially the students. The Naperville District School-Family-Community Partnership Core Team initiated the Knowledge Bank to leverage the experience and expertise that existed within each school for the benefit of all schools. The Knowledge Bank is a database of all the family and community involvement programs that are sponsored throughout the district. The Core Team wanted to prevent each school from reinventing the wheel as they developed their own partnership programs. They also wanted to ensure that everyone knew of the many diverse and valuable programs that existed and how to find out more about them if they were interested in sponsoring a similar activity at their school.

To develop the Knowledge Bank, the Core Team created a database format that would capture all of the key information about each activity or program. The database recorded:

- Activity name;
- Activity description;
- Name of sponsoring school;
- Name of sponsoring group (mostly Action Teams for Partnerships, but also included Home & School and Booster Club activities when relevant); and
- Contact name, phone number, and e-mail address.

The database organized entries around the framework of six types of involvement. Then, within each of the six categories the database separated the activities by elementary, junior high, and high school. For easier reference, the database also indicated activities that occurred at all schools and activities with similar themes.

With the format developed, the Core Team presented the idea to the twenty-one school principals in the district. The team followed-up this presentation with a formal request to principals and their Action Team for Partnerships chairpersons to complete the database forms for their school's activities. Schools received an example of one school's programs in order to understand how to complete the forms accurately and to gain an understanding of the kind of information they could expect to obtain from the Knowledge Bank. A group of four Core Team members worked with individual schools to answer any questions and ensure the information was returned by the deadline.

When the Core Team received all of the data, the information was typed, and the result was an eighteen-page document that included over one hundred programs. The Knowledge Bank was then presented at the annual Fall Orientation meeting to all new Action Team for Partnerships chairpersons and principals from across the district. Each school received a copy of the Knowledge Bank and the district's website posted a copy.

There was no money required to implement this practice. The Knowledge Bank did utilize people's time to collect, organize, type, and distribute program information.

In its first year of existence, the Knowledge Bank has been useful in a variety of ways across the district. Some schools used the database as an idea generator. Some called other Action Teams for more information about a specific program and how it was implemented. Still others have called schools that are sponsoring the same program to see if they can get ideas on ways to enhance their current activities.

Improvements to the Knowledge Bank are already under construction. Next year's Knowledge Bank will have two versions: the original version organized by the six types of involvement and a second version organized by school. This second version will allow individual school's information to be printed more easily and will give the Core Team a better idea of what each school is doing and where it can offer support.

Beyond knowledge sharing, the database has encouraged more networking among the twenty-one schools within the district.

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LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
Holy Family Catholic Regional Division No. 37
Peace River, Alberta, Canada

Responding to the need for ongoing support to partnership coordinators who chair school Action Teams for Partnerships, the district facilitator established leadership development workshops. The district facilitator believed that strong leaders would create strong teams and, therefore, build effective programs of partnership.

Site visits, discussions, and reviews of partnership programs demonstrated to the district that the success of Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) varied from school to school and that there seemed to be a direct correlation between effective teams and strong leaders. The leadership development workshops aimed to support all school-level partnership coordinators to strengthen their leadership skills. Throughout the school year, leadership trainers from the teachers' professional association and from outside sources conducted workshops for partnership coordinators on topics such as teamwork and communication strategies.

Held in September at the school division office, the first workshop focused on running effective meetings, strategies for decision-making, brainstorming techniques, and leadership styles. Twelve ATP leaders participated in the half-day session of hands-on activities. The simulation of the brainstorming technique influenced many leaders to use this strategy with their school Action Teams as witnessed in follow-up visits by the district facilitator.

At each workshop session, participants relished the practical ideas that they could readily tailor to their Action Teams' work. A newsletter workshop session offered ideas for improving school newsletters. After this district workshop, Glenmary School made changes to its existing school newsletter by creating a booklet format, using headlines and bullets in articles, adding an "Inside This Issue" section to the front cover, and inserting a two-way communication form. The school conducted a random telephone survey of parents that indicated parents appreciated the new format. The information presented at the workshop helped enhance the school's communication strategies.

The district facilitator followed up the workshop sessions by attending schools' Action Team meetings throughout the school year, noting occasions when leaders implemented strategies and techniques from the leadership development workshops. Since the leadership development workshops' inception, the district has noticed an increase in effectiveness of school Action Teams for Partnerships.

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MONTHLY LEADERSHIP MEETINGS
Orleans Parish Public Schools
New Orleans, Louisiana

Twenty-one high priority schools in New Orleans are implementing the National Network of Partnership Schools' model with the support of the New Orleans Public Schools Chief Executive Officer, Chief Academic Officers, and Executive Director of Title I. The district's Parental Involvement Program Specialist and Parent Facilitators hosted monthly meetings throughout 2001-2002 for chairpersons of the Action Teams for Partnerships and school principals to strategize, obtain information and resources, discuss concerns, and share success stories on best practices of partnership. These monthly leadership meetings enabled the twenty-one Action Teams to collaborate and network in an effort to build and sustain effective partnership programs benefiting students.

The twenty-one participating schools were identified according to their school performance score; special emphasis was given to schools in economically impoverished communities. Each of the identified schools received a written correspondence inviting the principal, parent liaison, school nurse and/or social worker, counselor, community person, and a teacher to attend the initial meeting.

At this first meeting, the schools learned about the framework of six types of involvement and the action team approach, engaged in structured discussions of current partnership practices and challenges, and completed membership forms to join the National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University. Subsequent meetings rotated from school to school allowing each school an opportunity to host a meeting as well as share its success stories.

The district Parental Involvement Office in conjunction with the twenty-one schools planned the full year's calendar of meetings so that each Action Team knew far in advance when meetings would take place. The monthly leadership meetings usually lasted two to three hours, typically on the third Wednesday of each month. About one week prior to the scheduled dates, schools received written reminders of the meetings with information about the agenda items. For most meetings, the Action Team chairpersons and principals brought their Action Plans to review progress with the district facilitators and their fellow Action Team leaders.

Partnerships between the schools, district, and state contributed to the strength of the monthly leadership meetings. The Louisiana Department of Education's Family Involvement Coordinators conducted presentations at one of the leadership meetings on using the *Starting Points Inventory*, writing Action Plans for Partnerships, the strengths of collaboration, and the importance of focusing on results. The state Family Involvement Coordinators also conducted follow-up site visits to schools. The district Parental Involvement Program Specialist and Parent Facilitators handled the essential details for each meeting: compiling the agenda, securing presenters, confirming sites, ordering refreshments, disseminating reminder notices, and facilitating the actual meetings. The district also maintained primary responsibility for ongoing technical assistance to the schools between meetings and provided the twenty-one schools with financial support and resources. The schools themselves made the meetings successful because of their enthusiasm to network with each other and to collaborate on effective strategies. They understood that their partnership practices needed to link to their school improvement plans, and they supported each other in this endeavor.

The goal for 2002-2003 is to continue to enhance the monthly leadership meetings to ensure sustainability of and enthusiasm for high quality partnership programs linked to school improvement goals. Efforts will be made to increase attendance of school principals at monthly meetings. The principals are supportive of the partnership programs, and their regular attendance at the monthly leadership meetings will further strengthen the Action Teams' work. The structured monthly leadership meetings provide critical ongoing support and guidance for the twenty-one schools to reach their goals for school, family, and community partnerships.

Yolonda Wornner Prevost, Parental Involvement Program Specialist
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PARENT CENTER INCENTIVE GRANTS
Los Angeles Unified School District
Los Angeles, California

"The Los Angeles Unified School District Parent Community Services Branch will promote increased student academic achievement by building the capacities of local schools and communities to train, educate, and support parents as partners in their children's education" .... (mission statement)

In 1994, the Los Angeles Unified School District created the Parent Collaborative under the auspices of the Parent Community Services Branch (PCSB) for better parent/community communication and decision-making. The Parent Collaborative currently has a membership of 101 parent representatives from the following: local districts (55), central district (4), PTA (2), non-public schools (1), and members-at-large (39). Members are parent volunteers; members-at-large may be employees. A PCSB staff member works with the Collaborative to coordinate its meetings.

The Parent Collaborative focuses on increasing student achievement. Recognizing that parents play crucial roles in their children's academic achievement, the Parent Center Incentive Grant was established. This grant allocated funds to schools specifically to open a parent center to encourage parent engagement. The grant is used to help start the center with basic office equipment such as computers, telephones, and supplies. With limited budgets, schools welcomed the parent center grant, which ranged from $3,000 to $7,500 depending on the student population.

The local school parent center provides a room or space set aside to facilitate and coordinate activities for parents. The center promotes a partnership of school, parents, family members, and community partners designed to increase student achievement. Parents, school staff, district staff, and/or community members conduct activities.

Locations for parent centers may include a classroom or portable classroom, or a designated area in the school library, cafeteria, auditorium, multipurpose room, or office.

A center may also be housed off campus in sites such as a public library, community center, or church.

Parent center activities are based on parent, school staff, and student surveys and may include the following:

- Parent and family workshops linked to increasing student achievement;
- Adult education classes such as literacy, ESL, citizenship, GED, and computer technology;
- Parent education classes;
- Establishing information and homework help lines;
- On-site or referral to health and human service agencies;
- School volunteer recruitment and training;
- Training for participation in decision-making bodies; and
- Developing a resource library for parents.

Since its inception, the Parent Collaborative has used the district's general funds to award 380 Parent Center Incentive Grants. In the 2001-2002 school year, an additional forty-two schools were awarded first-time grants in the amount of $123,000 from a budget of $150,000. Second-time awardees will share the remaining amount of funds.

Parent center directors meet monthly with staff to discuss, evaluate, and research activities. The directors and site administrators also conduct an annual survey about the effectives of the centers. Plans are in progress for parent center site visits.

The Parent Center Incentive Grant is one of many projects nurturing school and community partnerships supported by the Parent Community Services Branch, Los Angeles Unified School District.

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PARENT INVOLVEMENT POLICY AND PLANNING PROCESS

Pittsburg Unified School District

Pittsburg, California

Pittsburg Unified School District developed a district-wide parent involvement policy using the six types of involvement that complies with the California Education Code. To do this, the district instituted a shared decision-making process that incorporated input from schools and other stakeholders.

First, the district reviewed the California Education Code on state compensatory education, the district policy, and individual School Site Plans for parent involvement to determine the cohesiveness of the district. Then, they distributed to each school site a blank template that addressed the six types of involvement. School principals worked with the Parent Volunteer Coordinators and Action Teams for Partnerships to develop a parent involvement policy based on the six types of involvement. Teams included family members, students, administrators, teachers, community members, and other school staff. The district collected and reviewed the draft parent involvement policies from each school's Action Team, School Site Council, and English Language Council, and the District's Advisory and English Language Advisory Councils. They combined these policies into one that was submitted to the Board of Trustees for approval, ultimately passing with a 5-0 vote. The district-wide parent involvement policy was implemented in the 2001-2002 school year.

The entire district of students, families, school staff, and community members benefited from this practice. The shared decision-making helped ensure that all stakeholders would be committed to its success. The process shared information with stakeholders to expand their understanding of parent involvement to include the framework of six types of involvement. Furthermore, it addressed the partnership needs of all programs and fostered collaborative partnerships centered around one cohesive policy.

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PARENTING RESOURCES PACKAGE
Winnipeg School Division No. 1
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

Want to know what to do when you have a problem at your child's school? How about information on student assessments and evaluation? Perhaps you would like to know what parents can do about bullying, and you need this information in Spanish, Chinese, Laotian, Punjabi, or one of the many other languages translated for families in the Winnipeg School Division No. 1. The *Parenting Resources Package*, developed and distributed by the Parent Education Committee in Winnipeg, addresses these topics and much more. The Parent Education Committee is comprised of school administrators, consultants, teachers, volunteer coordinators, and a parent representative.

The *Parenting Resources Package* provides parents and professionals who work with parents information about the many resources available to them in the Winnipeg School Division No. 1. Specifically, the resource package aims to: (1) share best practices of school, family, and community partnerships in Winnipeg schools; (2) provide information and support to families in the community; and (3) support and enhance the home-school connection.

The *Parenting Resources Package* includes the following:

1. **Home-School Connection** – a collection of Winnipeg School Division No. 1 schools' best practices of school, family, and community partnerships based on the framework of six types of involvement.
2. **Brochures** – a listing and samples of brochures produced by the Division which are of interest to parents, including "Chat Rooms: Guidelines for Parents," "AIDS: A Parent's Guide to AIDS Education in Schools Grades 5 and 6," "Parent Help Line," and "A Parent's Guide to Special Education."
3. **Audio-Visual materials** – a listing of audio-visual resources related to parenting, and suitable for individual or group use. All materials are available for loan through the central resource library.

4. **Books** – an annotated list of books on parenting, literacy, home-school partnerships, and homework/study strategies. All materials are available to parents or other interested individuals from the central resource library.
5. **Workshops** – contains descriptive information on workshops for parents and volunteers scheduled during the school year. All workshops are free.
6. **Websites and Help Lines** – contains a selection of family-oriented websites and information about a Parent Help Line.

All information in the *Parenting Resources Package* is updated annually in the spring. Each school receives a survey to submit new initiatives for inclusion in the Home-School Connection section.

The Parent Education Committee distributes the resource package to all Division schools at the beginning of the school year. Copies are sent to the principal, the parent council, the school resource teacher or guidance counselor, and the parent resource room or school library. These recipients are guided to make the resource package readily accessible to all parents. In September 2001, the committee developed a distinctive poster to advertise the *Parenting Resources Package*, and schools display the poster in a highly visible area. Information from the *Parenting Resources Package* is also posted on the Division's website.

There has been an increasing demand for the *Parenting Resources Package* from year to year. Parent groups as well as individual parents have utilized the audio-visual materials and books. Increasingly, more parents have attended workshops. Schools have gained new ideas for school, family, and community partnership practices, and professional staff and parent councils have had easier access to information applicable to their purposes.

The *Parenting Resources Package* is one means of acknowledging the important role that parents play as their child's first teacher and recognizing them as valued partners in the educational process. By supporting parents and involving them in an active and meaningful way in their children's education, the Winnipeg School Division No. 1 is in turn benefiting students. This package is an effective and efficient means of sharing resources and information among schools, families, and others to support students.

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PROMISING PARTNERSHIP PRACTICES BOOK
Buffalo Public Schools
Buffalo, New York

For the past three years, the Buffalo Public Schools' Family Involvement Leadership Team has published its own *Promising Partnership Practices* based on activities from all Buffalo elementary schools who are members of the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS). The Buffalo Leadership Team created its district book as a way to instill pride and uniqueness in what the schools do to involve families and to give all of their schools an opportunity to be able to share and use other successful practices. The team also sent their annual collection to NNPS to recognize their schools' good work.

After studying the promising partnership practice format presented by NNPS at a leadership training conference, the Buffalo Leadership Team facilitators created a similar format tailored to their district schools. The form asked members of the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) to write a narrative answering specific questions about their activity. During one of the cluster meetings of ATP members, facilitators explained in detail the format for narratives and submission deadlines.

The first year's collection received ten promising practices—a good start, but not ideal. The following year, facilitators agreed to place more emphasis on time and content. Approximately two weeks before the submission deadline, the facilitators sent out reminders by mail and fax to building principals and to ATP key contacts. About two days before the deadline, the facilitators sent another reminder to key contacts of the schools who had not yet sent their practice. Then one week after the deadline, the facilitators made phone calls and visits to schools that had not yet responded. The second year's promising partnership practices collection increased by 90%.

The facilitators sent a thank you postcard to every school and a personal thank you to every person who submitted a practice. Celebration and acknowledgements have been instrumental to the success of this district promising partnership practices book. When any of the schools' practices appear in the National Network's *Promising Partnership*

Practices book, the Leadership Team sends a note of congratulations to the person who submitted the practice. At the End-of-Year Celebration, the facilitators give certificates of participation to the schools who submitted practices and framed certificates to the schools who were selected for the NNPS book. Each school also receives a copy of *Buffalo Promising Partnership Practices*. The Action Team for Partnerships members are asked to display the book in the parent room or parent area of their schools so that families and teachers have access to the information.

The costs to implement this practice are minimal. The Leadership Team has its own bookbinding machine so the facilitators produce the books themselves. Expenses include paper, bookbinders, and frames for the certificates. The Leadership Team generates the certificates, cover designs, thank-you cards, and postcards on computers and prints them in-house. The team is considering partnering with a local business to offer unique incentives such as shirts, caps, and jackets to schools that submit practices. This strategy may help the Leadership Team reach its goal of 100% school participation in the district collection.

The annual *Buffalo Promising Partnership Practices* has given Buffalo's Action Team members another resource to utilize when planning new activities in their schools. The book has fostered communication and connections between local schools that are implementing school, family, and community partnership practices to support school goals. The book has also helped Buffalo schools receive greater recognition from the National Network of Partnership Schools.

Judi Roberson, Kathy Critharis, & Cristy Rivera, Facilitators for Parent Involvement
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SHARED DECISION-MAKING IN STRATEGIC PLANNING

Whitewater Unified School District
Whitewater, Wisconsin

Changes are easier to implement when the important players are involved in making the decisions. Parents, students, school staff members, and administrators share decision-making in all of Whitewater's school building leadership teams as well as a district leadership council. The district has worked hard to institutionalize shared decision-making so that each of its schools' communities successfully collaborates to support student achievement.

Shared decision-making in Whitewater was institutionalized beginning with the school board adopting a policy that defined shared decision-making. Then, the district employed a consultant to conduct trainings to help the school building leadership teams focus on improvement and develop familiarity with SMART goals (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, time-bound). At that same time, the district adopted an Improvement Calendar that has become an expected process followed by every school each school year.

The Improvement Calendar outlines the activities of the building leadership teams of parents, students (at the high school), school staff, and administrators. In August, teams come together for one to two days of planning to outline goals for the year. Individuals are paid small stipends for attending. In September, buildings refine the goals and improvement plans. In October, the goals and plans are presented to the school board. In January, the teams come together in an afternoon for mid-year review. Each building team shares a status report on goal progress. In February, the Budget Development Team (with staff and parent representation from each school) begins meeting to develop the next year's budget. In May, the building teams come together again for an end-of-year status report. In June, a preliminary report is made to the Board regarding each building's goals and test data results. The summer is dedicated to reviewing data and refining goals for the next year. Then in August, the process begins anew. This defined calendar has helped schools monitor their progress.

Making *real* decisions for the school proved difficult for the teams initially. Each school team had to transition from being a group of individuals to being a cohesive, collaborative team. By convening all of the teams three times a year in district-wide meetings, the school teams learned about the substantive decisions made by some teams and, therefore, were inspired to follow suit. The concept of shared decision-making has become the way schools do business in Whitewater. All interview teams are now teams of parents, teachers, administrators, and, at the high school level, students. All significant changes, such as schedules, courses, and programs are expected to go through the respective building leadership team. Those that circumvent the system usually end up going back through the system in order to gain the credibility that comes from having all stakeholders involved.

In addition to the regularly scheduled district-wide meetings, a second strategy that supported collaboration on school teams is the District Curriculum Leadership Council. This council was established to hear concerns about the manner in which the building teams are operating and to keep things honest. This K-12 group consists of the principal of each building, two teachers from each building, several district coordinators, and parents. If there arises a concern that power is not as shared in some school building teams as in others, this council responds with suggestions and directions for operation. This council plus the three district-wide meetings holds teams accountable for progress and collaboration.

District support in institutionalizing shared decision-making teams has called attention to the benefits gained by staff and parents working together. Better decisions have been made from these collaborations, and it has been much easier to garner support for programs when a lot of voices have been heard in shaping the ideas. The district has even observed improved student test scores in schools where the building teams have focused on student achievement goals.

Collaboration has been hard work for both the schools and the district, yet productive in the long run. Structured support for parents, community, and school members to share decision-making has improved programs and practices for all learners.

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VILLAGE EMPOWERMENT SEMINAR
Howard County Public School System
Ellicott City, Maryland

The first annual Village Empowerment Seminar was designed to maximize school, family, and community partnerships in the district's Title I elementary schools to support the education of children identified by district data as underachieving. The seminar targeted parents of these children as well as central office and school-based personnel in an effort to empower all stakeholders to develop a plan for partnerships to support families' and schools' educational goals for students. Specifically, the seminar strove to empower parents to support their children's learning in new ways, develop a personal plan for accomplishing identified goals, and network with other parents. The seminar aimed to give central office and school staff new ways to develop two-way communication with families and strategies to support family involvement in all areas and classrooms. Overall, the Village Empowerment Seminar allowed stakeholders time to engage in rich discussions centered on family involvement and its connections with school improvement and school reform.

From 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on Saturday, April 20th, fifty-five parents and grandparents and forty school staff engaged in informative activities and animated discussions at the district staff development center. The first session focused on "Empowering Families from Plans to Practice" with an emphasis on creating a school-wide vision and plan for family involvement. This session was followed by a brunch from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. where participants visited the community resource table and networked with each other. Then the facilitator led a session, "Creating an Action Plan for Achievement," for parents to get to know their children's learning styles, learning preferences, and optimal learning environment. For the rest of the seminar, parents were guided in making an individual plan to support their children as well as strategies to use in communicating this information to teachers.

A planning committee of staff and parent representatives collaboratively handled preparations for the Village Empowerment Seminar. The committee created and distributed invitations for parents and memos for staff; hired an outside facilitator; secured a caterer; designed a logo for programs, notepads, and a banner; ordered tote bags, books, and local resource information; contracted two busses to pick up participants at each school and identified neighborhoods; created a database to record participant information; obtained door prizes including dictionaries and other educational materials; and made phone calls, phone calls, and more phone calls to parents.

One challenge was knowing how many staff and parents would attend the seminar. Parent-friendly registration strategies were designed to ease this challenge. Parents could register by returning the response form to school in person or by mail, or by calling in their RSVP. Overall, personal outreach on an individual basis was the most successful strategy for the planning team to secure replies from staff and parents.

To support parent and other caregiver attendance, the team arranged childcare on site at the seminar location. There were approximately fifty children ages 2-11 registered for childcare. Ten adult school system employees with the aid of teen volunteers provided indoor and outdoor structured activities for the children. While the adults had brunch, the children ate pizza.

The event budget totaled approximately $5500 with most of the expense allocated for the outside facilitator's fees and expenses. The seminar's strong response from participants made this money well spent. The Achievement Equity Office, the Black Student Achievement Elementary Office, and the Family and Community Outreach Office all contributed funds for the seminar.

The first annual Village Empowerment Seminar helped establish relationships between schools and families of students with promise. With continued support from the district, the information and strategies gathered from the seminar will translate into ongoing effective practices.

Jean W. Lewis, Family and Community Outreach Speicalist
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VOICE MAIL COMMUNICATION
Rush-Henrietta Central School District
Henrietta, New York

To facilitate home-to-school communication, the district purchased a voice mail system and assigned every teacher and administrator a voice mail number. When the voice mail system was first brought in, many people resisted using it. After a few years and some encouragement, its use is now widespread.

Each of the five elementary schools, two middle schools, and two high schools posted the voice mail numbers every month in their school newsletters, encouraging parents to contact the teachers using the voice mail system. Building principals and the district superintendent supported teachers in using the voice mail; teachers are required to check voice mail and return all calls daily.

Families used the voice mail system to get homework assignments, express concerns, ask for clarification on assignments or school programs, leave information such as new phone numbers, and request conferences. Though the number of voice mail messages is not officially monitored, all principals have reported a big increase in the contacts between home and school.

The voice mail system was purchased through the district facilities budget. By opening up communication opportunities between home and school, the district hopes to foster stronger comprehensive programs of school, family, and community partnerships.

Kay M. Lyons, Partnership Schools Facilitator
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ORGANIZATION-LEVEL LEADERSHIP

Organizations in the National Network of Partnership Schools conduct leadership activities, and help elementary, middle, and high schools to develop their programs of school, family, and community partnerships.

KAMP (KINDERGARTNERS ARE MOST PRECIOUS)
Hawaii Parental Information and Resource Center
Parents and Children Together
Honolulu, Hawaii

"Welcome to Pu`ohala!!! We look forward to having your child in our kindergarten class this September!" The organizers of KAMP (Kindergartners Are Most Precious) invited parents and incoming kindergartners to this orientation event designed to ease students' and families' transitions to school. KAMP provided parents with an opportunity to meet their children's teachers, administrators, and school staff; obtain a classroom orientation on classroom procedures and curriculum; learn about a few school procedures; participate in parent-child learning activities; and meet other parents and classmates. In August 2001, twenty-four schools in Hawaii representing fifty-five classes conducted KAMP for 950 kindergartners, 100 siblings, and 1400 parents.

KAMP was designed to support parents to feel comfortable about their children's school so that they would be involved in their children's schooling from the very first day. The orientation aimed to relieve the anxiety that parents and children might feel as they transitioned to kindergarten. KAMP created an informal and fun setting for interaction between the family and the school staff to begin the year with a strong foundation.

The 2001 half-day KAMP at one elementary school began with families coloring the welcome banner, drawing pictures, and reading together. The interactive schedule included sessions for orientation between kindergarten teachers and parents, kindergartners-only fun learning activities, parent-child interactive learning, and information on school resources for parents. Parents learned about the school's vision, the kindergarten curriculum, who to contact for what information, and the many ways that they could be involved with the school. Everyone enjoyed lunch in the cafeteria following KAMP. Similar schedules of activities were conducted by each of the participating elementary schools.

The Hawaii Parental Information and Resource Center (PIRC) Coordinator called together the KAMP planning and implementation team before the end of the prior school year to organize preparations. The school principal and kindergarten teachers took primary responsibility for designing KAMP, and then shared responsibility for implementation with school support staff (cafeteria manager, head custodian, after-school care coordinator, health aide, Parent Community Networking Center coordinator), librarian, counselor, PTA President, and other staff and volunteers. The PIRC Coordinator assumed responsibility for managing the schedule of preparations and making sure that all team members met task deadlines.

KAMP expenses depended on the lunch that was provided and the number of people who attended the event. The PIRC budget provided funding as needed. The school cafeteria prepared the lunch—usually rice and chili and orange slices. Materials for the parent-child activities were borrowed from the Cooperative Extension Service.

To enhance the implementation of KAMP for the coming school year, a how-to handbook will be available for each school conducting KAMP. Also, volunteer training will be held before KAMP to help make the day run smoother.

Schools conducting KAMP have observed clear benefits for students, families, and the school. Most importantly, kindergarteners are happy to come to school on the first day. They are greeted by familiar faces, and they have some idea of what to expect at school. In most cases, there is no longer any separation anxiety for either parents or children. KAMP has helped ease the transition to kindergarten, and has begun a positive partnership between families and the school.

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MOTHER-DAUGHTER COLLEGE PREPARATION PROGRAM

Families In Schools
Los Angeles, California

Families In Schools developed the Mother-Daughter College Preparation Program, using a model from the University of Texas, El Paso, to build college awareness among mothers and fifth grade and middle school girls. The program seeks to increase student academic achievement by encouraging mothers and daughters to build a partnership that would put the girls on the path to college. The mothers play a key role in the program to ensure that the girls receive family support in their endeavors.

To begin the program, Families In Schools created the Mother-Daughter Implementation Team of district leaders, university personnel, and Families In Schools staff. The Implementation Team designed program goals and activities and defined team members' roles. They designed the Mother-Daughter College Preparation Program to consist of monthly mother-daughter joint activities (university visits, conferences, communication workshops, meetings to develop an action plan for college, and overnight stays at a local university), monthly daughters-only meetings (led by a teacher and focused on college/career awareness and academic/life skills), and bimonthly mothers-only meetings (facilitated by a trained parent educator and centered on college awareness, college preparation, academic support, and the mother-daughter relationship).

Teachers and parent educators attended an orientation to introduce them to program goals, curriculum and activities, recruitment and selection of program participants, and outreach strategies. Following the orientation, each school selected its mother-daughter participants by requesting staff recommendations and inviting recommended students and their mothers to complete an application and participate in an interview. The program targets fifth grade and middle school girls and their mothers, who meet the following criteria: (1) the daughter would be the first in her family to graduate from college; (2) the mother or another adult is willing to participate in the program; (3) the participants would benefit from participating in the program; and (4) participants commit to taking part in all program activities.

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Throughout the year, Families In Schools provides overall program coordination, develops program curriculum, plans all mother-daughter joint events, and facilitates monthly teacher and parent educator meetings. District leaders work with the schools to assist program implementation. The university staff plans and conducts mother-daughter events at the university including a welcome brunch for new participants, a science day, and an overnight stay. Each participating school manages the day-to-day program activities including leading daughter meetings and mother meetings.

Families In Schools faced two major challenges while implementing the Mother-Daughter College Preparation Program. First, although every mother-daughter pair that was invited to apply for the program was enthusiastic about the program, many mothers were concerned that their work and family commitments would prevent them from participating. In response, it was determined that when a mother could not participate in the program, the family could designate another adult relative to participate with the student. Currently, grandmothers, aunts, older sisters and a few fathers are taking part in the program. Also, most of the meetings were held at times that would be convenient for the majority of the mothers including Saturday mornings and weeknights. Second, the program experienced substantial growth in its second year. At present, the program serves 17 schools and over 400 mother-daughter pairs. To accommodate this rapid growth, Families In Schools and the Mother-Daughter Implementation Team established monthly teacher and parent educators meetings to foster effective communication between the schools and Families In Schools.

Key stakeholders share the core expenses for the program. Families In Schools staffs a full-time program coordinator, funded by private foundation grants, to manage all seventeen schools. Teachers and parent educators receive a stipend funded by the schools, school districts, and private funds. Transportation for field trips to universities and program materials are paid for by the schools, school districts, Families In Schools, or donated by community organizations. District leaders and university partners contribute personnel and resources.

An external evaluation using surveys and focus groups determined that the Mother-Daughter College Preparation Program directly benefits the mother and daughter participants. Notably, participants increase their knowledge of college and college requirements, mothers and daughters increase their communications and discussions about academics and college, and the girls are more motivated to succeed academically. The program also benefits the participants' families because the mothers and daughters share their newfound knowledge with fathers, brothers, sisters, and other relatives. Finally, the program benefits the schools by increasing staff understanding of the importance of beginning college awareness in elementary and middle school and the value of working with families.

As the program continues to develop, Families In Schools is creating other college awareness programs to serve more students and families. Selected schools have organized Family College Nights where students and parents learn about goal setting, college preparation, and strategies for achieving academic success. Additionally, a Families and Sons program is being developed.

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PARENT LEADER GROUP

Hawaii Parental Information and Resource Center

Parents and Children Together

Honolulu, Hawaii

A major role of the Hawaii Parental Information and Resource Center (PIRC) is to bring resources to the schools. For the Castle Complex Schools, rich resources in the form of parent leaders already existed. To build on this asset, the PIRC Coordinator assisted the schools by bringing together these leaders as a network.

Castle Complex Schools includes Castle High School, King Intermediate, and their eight feeder elementary schools. Each school has organizations focused on family and community involvement including Parent-Teacher Associations, Parent Partnership Teams, and Ohanas (a Hawaiian word for family, which represents the community of the school). The purpose of the Parent Leader Group was to convene quarterly the presidents of these organizations from each school to share resources and ideas and to organize advocacy efforts in Castle Complex policy making.

The PIRC Coordinator, in collaboration with the organization presidents, served as the primary facilitator for the Parent Leader Group. Together, the coordinator and the group members generated agenda items for each quarterly meeting during the school year. A typical meeting had three to four agenda items such as sharing fundraising opportunities and experiences, brainstorming ideas for increasing parent participation, discussing leadership development for parents, and addressing the challenge of getting people to commit to filling board offices. The PIRC Coordinator used these meetings to convey information on pertinent pending legislation, available parenting resources, Department of Education or district proposals, and new leadership development materials. Each meeting also included time for group members to share activities and progress updates of their respective schools. These school-by-school updates often led to other topics of discussion as members of the group posed questions. If major discussions seemed to be developing, the topic would be held as a future agenda item. The group recognized the need to balance accomplishing the written agenda and allowing for related discussions.

To accommodate the parent leaders' very busy schedules, the facilitator made certain that meetings ran on time from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. The meetings were usually informal and involved much laughter and food, of course. There was no budget for the practice; the group partnered with another non-profit, Queen Liliu`okalani Children's Center, for the use of free meeting space.

The group members appreciated these structured opportunities to share the trials and tribulations, as well as the fulfillment and positive impact, of being a parent leader. The meetings provided time for encouragement, empathy, and inspiration for the leaders by the leaders. Leaders left meetings energized: feeling that they were not the only ones struggling with issues and that the work they were doing was making a difference. The schools' parent organizations benefited through better coordinated fundraisers, open houses, and activities. The meetings also enabled the PIRC personnel to develop relationships, share information, and encourage community building between the schools.

Although still in its infancy, the potential of the Parent Leader Group is tremendous. Plans for the future include using the group as sponsors, trainers, and recruiters in parent leadership training for the Castle Complex schools, developing a stronger e-mail communication system to disseminate parent relevant resource materials, and planning a major Complex-wide fair or carnival as a fundraiser. This asset-based network of leaders cultivates and organizes resources that should benefit the school experiences of Castle Complex students.

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PARENT-TO-PARENT INTERVIEWS
Texas LEADS Project
Austin, Texas

A basic tenet of the Texas LEADS (Local Empowerment for Accessible and Diverse Schools) Project is that parents are leaders and decision-makers. The Texas LEADS Project is working in two Austin middle schools to develop a strategy to gather input from parents on their needs, goals, and school activities that they would like to see implemented, as well as to encourage parents to take leadership roles in implementing projects.

In the project's first year at Fulmore Middle School, the staff mailed home a two-page survey to each family. This two-page survey was actually four pages with the Spanish translation included, a necessary tool to reach many parents at the school. The survey was costly to translate, print, and mail, and the response rate was about 10 percent. The project staff determined that the follow-up needed to secure a better response rate would be very labor intensive for volunteers or expensive to hire outsiders. Furthermore, several parents expressed their frustration with surveys and their intent not to respond to yet another survey that probably would not affect any change. Only a week after the Texas LEADS Project survey, the school district disseminated another parent survey required by Title I. The project staff decided at that time that they needed a better way of obtaining information about parent satisfaction, concerns, and interests. The result was parent-to-parent interviews.

The first attempt at parent-to-parent interviews took place at Fulmore Middle School during parent leadership meetings led by the Intercultural Development Research Association. Fulmore parent interviewers received interview training and were then asked to interview other parents. The feedback from this process proved interesting: parents conducting the interviews realized that they had assumptions that may not be accurate about how other parents felt; parent interviewees felt glad to be asked their opinion; good information was obtained; and a dialogue was established.

Project staff decided to expand the process and ask parents to interview others outside the meetings, then bring back the information. This brought the first challenge: parents generally did not do their homework. Many parents reported lack of time, not feeling comfortable approaching people, and not knowing when or where to find parents to sit down for 15 to 20 minutes to conduct the interviews. In testing this with other parents, mostly Spanish-speaking parents new to the United States, some were reluctant to answer questions, explaining that they had not ever really thought about their concerns with the school.

When the Texas LEADS Project expanded to Mendez Middle School late in the school year, the project staff modified the parent-to-parent interview approach. Small notebooks, like the ones journalists use, were purchased for each Action Team for Partnerships member. At the first Action Team meeting, members paired off to interview each other using the notebooks. The question posed was: "What are the big issues for you at Mendez that you would like to see worked on next year?" Optional follow-up questions were: "What would you like to see done about these issues?" and, "How would you like to help next year?" Then, the whole team recorded all of the answers.

Following this initial interview process, Action Team members were assigned to interview other parents over the next two weeks. Interviewers turned in the notebooks to one of the team members a few days prior to the team's planning meeting, and results were typed up for consideration in next year's plans.

The parent-to-parent interview process continues to evolve. The biggest challenges are helping parents feel more comfortable conducting the interviews and making it easy for parents to find other parents to interview without having to aggressively solicit participation. Nonetheless, this is a promising strategy to learn more about what the community wants, to hear from other parents, to establish dialogues between parents around school issues, and to develop parent leaders.

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STATE-LEVEL LEADERSHIP

States in the National Network of Partnership Schools establish policies and conduct leadership activities to guide and support school districts and schools in developing strong programs of school, family, and community partnerships.

FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL CELEBRATIONS

CT Parents Plus/United Way of Connecticut
in collaboration with
Connecticut State Department of Education
Rocky Hill, Connecticut

The first day of school is the only day of the school year on which no child has yet been in trouble and no phone calls have yet gone home because of problems. First Day of School Celebrations encourage family and community members to come to school and to develop relationships with teachers and administrators. The Celebrations are based on the belief that parents who meet the teachers on the first day of school, when everyone has a clean slate, will be more willing to contact teachers later about concerns and questions, and vice versa.

In Connecticut, each school designs its own celebration. It can be one hour, one morning, or a whole day. A committee of administrators, teachers, parents, community members, and in some cases the Action Team for Partnerships, plans the celebration. Schools have had parades, assemblies for parents, tours of the building, classroom activities for parents and students together, workshops for parents, balloons, clowns, music, food, and other activities. In some towns the Mayor has been involved, visiting the schools and issuing a proclamation for the day. Many towns have had media coverage of their Celebrations. Local celebrities have also been involved, walking the students and parents to school, reading stories, or performing. Businesses have donated food, school supplies, backpacks, t-shirts, and items for parent raffles; and Fleet Bank has donated money to many urban elementary schools to fund their First Day Celebrations. Several community businesses have given parents time off to attend First Day Celebrations.

In some Connecticut school systems, the First Day of School Celebration has been mandated district-wide. In others, only individual schools have participated. Connecticut's First Day Celebrations began with two schools in 1999, and increased to 47 schools in 2001. Currently another 43 schools are in the planning stages for 2002. The concept of

First Day is introduced during Action Team for Partnerships training and follow-up technical assistance is offered.

Several challenges arose in implementing the Celebrations. First, transitions in leadership took place at both district and school levels during planning for First Day. For example, one new principal was appointed two days before the first day of school, knowing nothing about the plans for that day. To assist new leaders, Connecticut Parents Plus brought them into the planning for First Day as soon as possible. The new principal cited earlier thought First Day was a great idea, and carried it off with style and grace under fire. First Day participation in her school has increased from 150 parents the first year to 250 the second year, and 400 this year.

A second challenge was the small number of people available during the summer to handle final preparations. Schools are now encouraged to start planning for First Day in February, and to include on their planning team people who will be able to do some work over the summer. Many schools also did not know how to access community resources. To meet this third challenge, the local United Ways have helped the schools access business leaders and community organizations that can help with planning, as well as be present in the schools on the First Day to provide information and resources to parents.

Costs for First Day of School Celebrations vary from school to school. Some schools get everything donated and spend no money at all. Others receive cash contributions (including the Fleet Bank money and, in one community, matching United Way money) to use for refreshments, parent incentives, and other expenses. Some schools have had trouble spending their entire $350 allocation from Fleet Bank.

Surveys sent to the schools following their celebrations provided quantitative information about student and parent attendance on the First Day, and anecdotal information about activities and results. Of note, more parents were in the buildings for longer than had been the case before First Day Celebrations were instituted. Those schools that have done this more than once report increasing numbers of parents attending each year. Comments from parents and teachers are overwhelmingly positive about the events. Parents feel welcome and appreciative of the effort being made by the school. Teachers appreciate the opportunity to meet their students' families in a relaxed, pleasant atmosphere. Those schools that have done this more than once report increased attendance at other school functions throughout the year, and better communication between school and home.

First Day Celebrations have occurred in all 50 states. There is a national foundation, the First Day Foundation in Vermont (www.firstday.org), that supplies free materials and technical assistance to communities and schools planning First Day Celebrations. In 2001 there were 4,000 schools nationwide that held celebrations. State Departments of Education can promote this idea statewide as a promising practice for those schools that are looking to increase family and community involvement. In several states, Connecticut included, the PIRC (Parent Information and Resource Center) has taken the lead in promoting First Day Celebrations. The PIRC in collaboration with the State Department of Education would be an unbeatable combination in any state!

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MARYLAND'S FAMILY INVOLVEMENT POLICY INITIATIVES

Maryland State Department of Education

Baltimore, Maryland

The Maryland State Department of Education, under the leadership of State Superintendent Nancy S. Grasmick, has emphasized family involvement as integral to the state's development of high standards. With strong commitment to family involvement in schools, Dr. Grasmick established the Family Focus Council in April 2000 to advise on, advocate for, and help develop programs and policies that encourage effective home-school partnerships. Members of the Council include representatives of school systems, public libraries, statewide nonprofit organizations, faith-based organizations, Parent-Teacher Associations, interdepartmental offices, national organizations, and many others. These members are charged with supporting strategies to create school, family, and community partnerships in all Maryland schools. The Council began its initiative by drafting the state policy on family involvement that was adopted in October 2001 as a resolution.

The planning process to develop the family involvement policy began in July 2000 as a sub-committee of the Family Focus Council. The twenty-member group included representatives from the Maryland PTA, National Network of Partnership Schools, public libraries, National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education, non-profit organizations, local school systems, and staff from the Maryland State Department of Education. The policy enhanced the Maryland State Board of Education's resolution on parent/community involvement of 1991. Over the course of the year, committee members reviewed the current resolution, researched policies from other states, and crafted language that met the needs of all stakeholders included in the policy. The committee also solicited input from various national, state, and local organizations, families, and school systems. The policy encourages schools and local school systems to implement long-term, comprehensive programs using the six types of involvement to build on the strengths of families and communities as schools work on reaching academic success for all children.

After the policy was adopted in October 2001, the next step was to communicate the policy to the schools, families, and communities in Maryland. The Maryland State Department of Education sent a press release to the media announcing the policy. A poster and brochure were produced to share the policy in easy-to-read formats. Dr. Grasmick sent a letter to every Maryland school with a copy of the policy poster, and copies of the poster were distributed to public libraries and PTAs, as well as other stakeholders. The brochure contains the policy, a letter from Dr. Grasmick, tips for helping children to succeed in school, and contact information for further questions. It has been widely distributed at public events and conferences.

In November 2001, a ten-member subcommittee of the Family Focus Council began the essential task of turning the policy into action steps. This representative group has collaborated to write the goals, strategies, and activities to accompany the family involvement policy. The committee is in the process of examining critical issues and research-based information, setting goals based on the six types of involvement, developing strategies and guidelines, and identifying activities for comprehensive family and community involvement in Maryland schools. Once this document is completed in fall 2002, it will be presented to the State Board of Education for their approval. Once approved, dissemination and training through the PTA and the local school systems' family involvement coordinators will support schools in enhancing their partnership programs to align with the policy. The evolution of policy to action steps has taken time, and should prove to be a sound foundation for statewide school, family, and community partnership program development.

For further information about Maryland's family involvement policy or other family and community involvement initiatives, please visit the website at www.msde.state.md.us.

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SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN TRAINING

Louisiana State Department of Education, Region I

Belle Chasse, Louisiana

The Louisiana Accountability System requires all schools to write School Improvement Plans to maximize student achievement. The Region I Education Service Center is responsible for providing training to school and district personnel on writing the School Improvement Plans. Region I incorporated school, family, and community partnerships training into the school improvement plan trainings to assist schools in understanding the roles partnerships play in increasing student learning. This practice aimed to clarify for schools and districts which family and community involvement activities were likely to reach which results for students, and dispel the myth that any family involvement activity will automatically raise student achievement.

The Region I Education Service Center team designed a training module, as part of the school improvement plan training, focused on family involvement activities that are directly related to student learning. For every strategy listed in the school improvement plan, the state requires that family involvement activities be included. During the training, participants divide into teams to brainstorm activities in their schools that involve families or communities. The team's reporter records the long list of activities. Participants then identify those activities that are directly related to student learning. After discussion of what is and is not related to student learning, the six types of family and community involvement are introduced. Participants then revisit their brainstormed lists to identify which type of involvement each activity addresses. In culmination, facilitators bring the whole group together for discussion and questions. From this approach, participants have gained a new understanding of the ways families and communities can be involved in education and which types of activities have a more direct relationship to student learning. The Region I Education Service Center team of trainers collects the plans written by participants to evaluate how family and community involvement activities have been incorporated meaningfully into school improvement plans.

The Region I training has targeted school district leaders, staff developers, Title I coordinators, principals, assistant principals, district assistant team leaders, school improvement teams, distinguished educators, teachers, Title I parent involvement liaisons, and parental involvement program specialists. This newly designed training module has helped these participants think of activities beyond their current practices of family involvement that directly relate to student learning.

The next step for the Region I Education Services Center will be to identify and share successful practices going on throughout the region. The staff will also visit schools to observe the implementation of family and community involvement activities.

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